PURGATORIO AND PARADISO

FROM THE

DIVINA COMMEDIA

OF

DANTE

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY

C. POTTER

HYDE PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Readers are asked to pay particular attention to the following abstracts from the Rules governing the use of the Library.

The Library is open on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9-30 a.m to 8-0 p.m., Wednesday 9-30 a.m. to 1-0 p.m., Saturday 9-30 a.m. to 5-0 p.m. The Entrance wicket will be closed five minutes before closing time.

The time allowed for reading books is a fortnight. If kept beyond this period, a fine of one penny a week or portion of a week will be incurred.

Books may be reserved on payment of one penny.

Borrowers are asked to keep the books clean and to take special care of them in their passage to and from the Library.

All possible assistance in the selection of books will be gladly given by the Library Staff.

N. SECKER, PRINTER, HYDE.

HYDE PUBLIC LIBRARY.

NOTES ON THE USE OF THE LIBRARY.

The Committee desire that the best possible use shall be made of the Library by the inhabitants of Hyde, and the staff will render assistance to readers in pursuing any line of enquiry.

Readers should make themselves conversant with the arrangements of the Library and in every case where possible to come before evening, when the system of classification and other methods in use can be explained; this will be found a great help.

A Catalogue of all the books in the Library is kept on cards, the cabinet containing these cards in alphabetical order can be seen in the Library.

Borrowers are particularly requested to return books taken down for examination, to their proper places on the shelves.

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Loitering and talking will not be permitted.

The Library is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, from 9-30 a.m. to 8-0 p.m.; Wednesday, 9-30 a.m. to 1-0 p.m.; Saturday, 9-30 a.m. to 5-0 p.m.

The time allowed for reading this book is TEN days, the day of issue and day of return not included. If kept beyond this time, a fine of ONE PENNY for every WEEK or portion of a WEEK, will be enforced.

Only actual borrowers who are enrolled on the register of the Library shall have the right of direct access to the book-shelves, but their representatives may be admitted at the discretion of the Librarian or his assistants. To prevent disappointment, such representatives should come provided with a list of several book titles and numbers.

Borrowers are required to keep the books clean. They are not to turn down or stain the leaves, nor to make pencil or other marks upon, or otherwise deface the same. They must report, before leaving the Library, any damage or injury done to the volumes they receive, and thus avoid any liability for the same. In wet weather borrowers are required to protect the books during their passage to and from the Library; and in order to avoid damage in this respect, it is desirable that books should be delivered to, and returned by, the borrowers personally. When this cannot conveniently be done, they are requested to send a responsible messenger, competent to deliver their messages, and to take due care of the books. The Librarian has power to refuse books to messengers whom he may consider not qualified to take proper care of them.

JOHN CHORTON, Librarian.

SIXTY-NINE CANTOS

FROM THE

DIVINA COMMEDIA

OF

DANTE

SIXTY-NINE CANTOS

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DANTE

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THE PURGATORIO AND PARADISO

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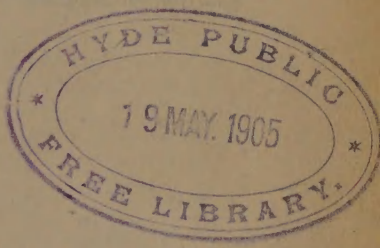

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To those who have desired some more leaves gathered from under a giant tree, these, with some apologies to Dante for the aroma if lost, where nothing can hinder the verdure permanently of a tree as a landmark for all time.

INFERNO

Canto I

THE ARGUMENT

The Poet having unwittingly entered a wood, and having lost the track, is exposed to great peril.

He reaches the open plain and dark valley below, where he meets the Shade of Virgil, who offers to guide him by other ways out of his difficulty.

Dante

INFERNO

Canto I

I WAS a Pilgrim that had turned astray
Within a trackless wood;
And in the middle of Life's journeying way
In shrouded darkness stood.

Why speak I now of that supremest hour,
Of savage vastness, and of dire dismay,
That with the bitterness of death recalls
Its ghastly, vanished power:

But to rehearse the good I since have tasted,
And tell of things committed to my care,
Since foolishness my soul had once belated,
That punishment did not prevent my blessing's share.

A few more steps, and fatal as to all,
The chasm lay beneath me, dark and wide;
The place my heart's fear should the most enthral,
Because the Light of Heaven had ceased to be my Guide.

Yet scarcely had I reached the vale below,
When early morning touched the shouldered hill,
And in its light the Star of Love aglow,
Shone with her Beacon fire, a Guide and Guardian still.

Then after needful rest with strength supplied,
I slowly, cautiously, my steps retrace;
And looked around me, at the chasm wide,
As rescued mariner the baffled surge might gaze.

When lo! some forest beast[1]; a spotted pard,
With nimble feet entangled where I stept,
Nor forward scarcely let me go one yard;
And more than once my thoughts repent the place I left.

The hour, the season, and the spring's young time,
Were soothing all my troubled heart of care,
For soon the sun would take his glorious climb
Above the stars; and earth as in her prime looked fair.

Nor marvelled I that the gay spotted thing,
Hindering my steps, should cease me to annoy;
But much I marvelled, when with thunderous swing,
And head erect, a lion came in sight which might destroy;

And with him came a wolf, a murderess, she
Insatiable, lean, with ravening jaw;
The dread of many people, now of me,
Who hence no hope to gain the nearer hill-top saw.

As those who covet most, with greed inspired,
Just touch the summit of their earthly gain;
When times have changed, and lost that they acquired,
With bitterness it feeds their empty thoughts and pain.

Urged by the beast relentlessly, my feet
Have reached the open arid desert now;
When with what speed I might, that forced retreat
Sent me beyond, to mute and sunless shades of woe.

[1] "Among the beasts of the Deoghur jungles an occasional *chetah* was to be found. In Oudh and other parts of India this animal is domesticated and kept by sporting Rajahs for the purpose of running down antelope; in the Deoghur country they keep themselves by running down the goats and sheep of the people. A curious animal is this hunting chetah, a cat (*i.e.*, a small and much attenuated leopard) down to its feet, and at their extremities a dog."—From *Blackwood's Magazine*, article by Edward Braddon, Nov. 1893.

There stood before me One methought looked faint,
As with long silence; and in piteous case,
All breathlessly to him I made my plaint,
"Or art thou Man, nor Ghost? help, save me from this place."

"Not man I am, though once in man's estate;
My parents from Mantua, Lombards they;
Born under Julian, when the times were late,
And false gods in; at Rome, in good Augustus' day,

"I was a poet, and I sang of one
Who came from Troy, after proud Ilion burned,
The just man he, of Anchises the son;—
But wherefore to this baneful place, thy footsteps turned?

"Why not ascend the Hill of thy delight,
The source and summit of thy every joy?"—
"And art thou Virgil, at whose soaring flight
I gazed?" as with bowed head I stood, shamefaced and coy.

"Fountain of Wisdom! where thy student drew
His inspirations; and the Guide of me;
Who in my style one only master knew;
So that what praise I gained, I gave it back to thee.

"Let the great love I bore thee, now avail
To save me from this savage, and her fright;
Which my whole being threatens to assail,
And from whose close pursuit just now I took my flight."

"Thee it behoves to take some other way
From this bad place, if now thou wouldst be free";
(For he had seen my tears) "that beast will slay
All those she hinders, but to stay their death's decree

"Her guilty nature makes her greedy will
Ravenous in feast, desire yet more of gain;

And strangely does she mate;—and strangely, till
The hound come that harries her; that kills her with heart pain.

"This shall not live on land or dross, but be
For Wisdom, and for Virtue, and for Love;
There in the Lowlands of his Italy,
Feltro to Feltro; those that others died for, the salvation prove.

"This will not turn, or stay until he chase
The envious beast, lurking where men may dwell,
Forward, and thence pursuing to the place,
Whence envy drove her forth; and chase her back to Hell.

"So, for thy betterment, as I discern
If thou wouldst follow wheresoe'er I led,
I would conduct thee to the eternal bourne,
And through the dark of Hell, with thee would closely tread

"Where thou shouldst hear the ancient spirits cry,
And see them suffer in the second death;
And after that, the souls of those that lie
Content, if saved by fire, they leave the sulphurous breath.

"And if the blessed Folk thou too wouldst see,
There is a soul, which is more blest than I,
That shall conduct thee to the place, and be
Thy Guide; when I will leave thee in her company.

"For of that city, Governor he reigns,
Who wills not any should be there through me;
Lord of all lands; sole Emperor there remains;
Blest man! His Choice for place in that high sovereignty."

"By the great God thou knew'st not, let me reach,
Through realms of woe, the safety I should find
At Peter's gate;—Poet, I thee beseech";
This said, he led the way; I followed close behind.

INFERNO

Canto IV

THE ARGUMENT

The Poets descend together into the limbo of the First Circle of the Inferno. Virgil discourses of the inhabitants to Dante, who thereafter recognises the mighty Spirits of Antiquity; and with less fear than he entered it, leaves for the Second Circle.

Dante

INFERNO

Canto IV

AS from beneath, o'er me there broke a sound,
A thund'rous swell of some mysterious power,—
Like those I felt, that in deep slumbers bound,
Suddenly start and wake at an unwonted hour.

How, when, and where:—till, with my eyes unsealed,
And consciousness returned, I looked, when lo!
A valley of great darkness stood revealed,
The gathered tone I heard, the infinite of woe.

Obscured with clouds and mist, the abyss profound
With straining eyes I strove to pierce; the gloom
Unfathomed could reveal no standing ground,
As to this blinded world descending we must come.

Then the pale poet silence broke, began,—
"I know this place, and surely shalt thou know."
And I, with colour like to his and wan,
"How canst thou soothe my doubt with fear upon thy brow?"

Then he to me: "The pity in my face
For all this people's anguish and their doom,
Thou didst mistake for fear of the dark place;—
But let us now descend, unhindered by the gloom."

So on he led me as he had before,
Towards the first circle which the abyss now spann'd,
And soon the sound I heard, I knew no more
As moans, but as the sighs the eternal breezes fanned.

Fixed in unchanging state a mighty throng
Gathered therein; women, and children, men,
Dismartyred stayed—"Wherefore to these belong,"
"Such doul thou hast not asked," said the good Master then.

"These had reward,—in wisdom's ways took heed,
No glaring sins their earthly lives had scarred,
But having lived without the Church's creed,
And unbaptised, as such of Paradise debarr'd.

"For in thy Faith this is the entrance door,
Although the Christian Era not begun,
They worshipped God, in ignorance, long before:—
Of such as these was I, and in their midst am one.

"For that defect, and not for graver sin,
Eternal loss, without transgression sore,
Hopelessly baffling my desires therein;
Oppressed with grief for valiant souls I knew of yore."

"Tell me, oh tell me, Lord and Master mine,"—
As though I would be certain of the Faith
That vanquished so much error,—"now define,
"Was it their merits, or one's else, prevailed in that thou saith?"

Then he as with my secret thought impressed:—
"I had not long been in the place of woe,
Ere I beheld, more potent than the rest,
One with the sign encrowned of victory on his brow.

"And wandering by, the shades that swept the gloom
Of our first parents, with their youngest son;
Abraham with Isaac and the patriarchs loom;
Moses lawgiver, and David the King was one.

"Israel with Rachel, that a nation gave
And bless'd to many others of that day,
Though in thy knowledge none besides can save—
But let not such discourse further our steps delay.

"And undeterred by any speech I made,
Descend we now, and through the dark profound
To that abode of spirits in the shade,
As dense and unrevealed as is the misty ground."

So onward still, and through the gloom he led;
Nor had we far advanced, when fiery glow
Conquered that realm of darkness:—as it fled
With horror some I saw, inhabitants below.

"Oh thou that gavest to Science and to Art
Due honour, tell me wherefore are these found
In so much anguish that they dwell apart
As disassociates from all else around?"

"The honourable mention that these made,
And fame they gathered, was not of thy life,
Acquirèd grace from heaven on them was laid;"—
Whose voice I too had heard above the earthly strife.

And most of all the poet's voice, whose shade
So honoured from their midst had disappeared,
My Master;—who resuming converse, said,
His voice subdued and faint—"Mark those we have revered

"The foremost of them, in his hand his sword,
Homer, with face unmoved, as others three
That follow him, their sire, of verse the Lord;—
Horace the Satirist, Ovid, and Lucan last we see."

Not by their names I knew them, but their voice
As heard by me, and in their memories blest,
The assembled students of a school so choice,
They made one, for his song, the Lord of all the rest

Who like an eagle high above them flew ; —
Came swiftly t'wards me with saluting sign,
Not for sufficient reason as I knew ;—
Whereat I saw my master smile, to honour me incline.

For that he knew it placed me in the set,
An added sixth amongst the assembled wise ;
So we passed through the radiance we had met
In silence as beseems it, and that speech supplies.

Till to a noble castle close we drew,
With seven arched portals round its lifted wall ;
Protecting it, a lovely streamlet, through
We stept as on dry ground, not hindering us withal.

And in the meadows bordering it between,
People were there, grave, and with dull set eyes,
And great authorities in them were seen ;
Seldom they speak,—their words scarce above whispers rise.

Some set apart, within the vaulted side
Of the wide openings, high exposed to view
In the broad light that showed their honour's pride,
Where all below might give their quality its due.

Whilst on the grass enamelled at their feet
The mighty spirits of the past were met ;
On the right hand, in this their green retreat,
In my opinion, seemed above the others set.

I saw Electra, with much company,
Of whom had Ettore and Æneas been ;
Cæsar, all armed, with his rapacious eye ;
Apart, Camilla, and the Amazonian Queen.

I saw the Latin King, and seated near,
Lavinia his daughter, Brutus with the heel
That chased out Tarquin, and besides these were
Lucretia, Julia, Marzia, and Corneile.

With Saladin, from others that withdrew ;
Whilst, somewhat nearer to the border ground,
The Master Mind that coloured all they knew,
Had his philosophers assembled close around ;

Admiring, honouring him in every look ;
Plato and Socrates in their retreat,
Whom others for their earlier models took ;
But power would fail to tell the numbers at their feet.

And hurried from the place we sought in dread,
Our company reduced from six to two,
Out of the quiet, trembling breezes led,
Another way I passed into the night below.

INFERNO

Canto V

THE ARGUMENT

In the Second Circle, having passed the Inquisitor Minos, Virgil introduces to Dante the Shades of some Historical characters; and after listening to the story of Francesca and Paolo, overcome by emotion, he falls to the ground in a swoon.

Dante

INFERNO

Canto V

IN the descent of the next circle now,
Less wide, but with complaint of sharper sting
More loud,—stood Minos with his wrinkled brow,
Hideous Inquisitor of deeds an entrance there might bring;

Examining each, dispatching with his word,
Such as confessed,—confess again, and sin,
To manner bred; and those that draw the cord
Tighter, that holds them fast, and keeps the Hell within:—

Continuing in their usual course below,
An entrance here would scarcely seem more sad,
When they descend to their apportioned woe,
According as the deeds they brought were low and bad.

Then Minos, when he saw me, thus he spake,
"Oh, thou that to this Hospice woe betide
Art come, despite the Inquisition that I make—
Beware the entrance broad;—in whom thou dost confide."

Answered my Duke;—"Wherefore so much complaint?
Do not deter his fated footsteps now;
By other's will he came, and by constraint;
A will none can resist, and ask no more, do thou."

Then had mine ear first caught the dolorous sound,
As conscious of the place whereto we came ;—
So full of plaint and murmuring all around,
The seat of darkest night, enduring still the same.

Mid groanings like to a tempestuous sea,
Always combating with contrary winds,—
The infernal storm that soothed can never be,
In irksome repetition that the spirit binds

Which had arrived beforehand to that end,
Wherein are now laments and loud complaint ;—
Virtue Divine blaspheming, they descend,
Foreknowing all the doom that waits their sinful taint.

And mingled with it a tormenting fact,
The condemnation of the carnal will,
When strong desire had conquered reason's tact ;—
Hither and thither borne without the guiding skill.

When in the colder time they leave the shore,
On battered wings that the wild storms detain,
Having no hope of rest for evermore
With the vast throng in space,—else had they less of pain.

And as in flock the cranes are seen to fly
Athwart the skies in a long darkened line,
With like complaining notes and mournful cry,
Some shadowy trailing forms nearest I could define,

Beating the heavy air : " Say who are those ? "
" A Queen, the first, of colour, wouldst thou know,
Much favoured as her license should disclose,
Who framed the laws to fit—the less her crimes might show.

" This is Semiramis ; by state decrees
Succeeding Nino, who to her was wed,
Ruling the lands held of the Soudanese ;
The other one, Love's maniac, to costliest tomb that fled.

"There, Cleopatra, most luxurious Queen;
Helen of Troy, who much of trouble brought
To many Peoples; and Achilles seen,
The mighty warrior, that for love his battles fought;

"Paris, and Tristram Britain's errant knight.
Thousands and thousands, shadowy forms are there,
Whom love had shattered, and withdrawn from sight;
Names of such ancient knights and dames for pity I forbear."

Then I commenced: "Poet, wilt thou allow
Speech of those two we see that, keeping close,
Cumber the air, they seem to move so slow?"
"When these are near, they will unfold to thee their woes.

"How love had brought them hither." Nearer now,
Fast as they might on the delaying air:—
"Oh, anxious heart!" to me they whispered low,
"Come near to us and speak, if others will forbear.

"For like two doves, responsive to a voice,
On outstretched wings shut out from a sweet nest,
To join the motley throng of Dido's choice,
In the malignant air we stay at love's behest.

"Oh, human heart! that, gracious and benign,
Hast come to visit us in the dull sky,
Which had relation to that world of thine:
If with the Universe's king happily thy friendships lie.—

"For thy own peace pray that he would remit
The penalty to natures so perverse;—
And if speech with us be not deemed unfit,
Whilst treacherous winds keep still, our tale we will rehearse.

"By the sea coast, where Po's descending wave
Laves with the sea in peace, our birth was there;—
Love that makes heart to heart like waters lave,
Brought mine to hers—parted, had sore offence to bear.

"Love, that another's loving ne'er forgives,
Held me fast bound in his unyielding net,
Nor has forsaken with our ended lives,—
Love that had brought us both to death—and Cain has met."

This was a hard word of them now I heard,
And when I understood the soul's offence
My countenance had changed, it was observed
So that the Poet said to me, "What thinkest thou from thence?"

And in response I said, "Alas, alas!
That such sweet thoughts and so much fond regard
Should but have led them to such dreary pass;"—
And where those two kept close, I turned Francesca toward:

"Francesca, hearing this of thy sad fate
Has filled my heart with pity most, and grief,—
But say, when gentlest sighs were breathed of late,
Was there no doubting mingled with thy fond belief?"

Then she to me: "There is no anguish dealt
To misery that gives a sharper blow
Than memory of departed joys once felt,
As thou in thy affections, too, must surely know.

"And if thou hast an earnest wish to scan
All the deep rooting of our earliest love,—
And if to know thou canst how it began,
Not from its bitter end that tale wouldst thou remove.

"Of Lancelot, whom love had strictly bound,
A tale one day to our delight we read,
Believing nought amiss might there be found,—
Suspecting more,—had made our heightened colour spread,

"And reading on,—all in a moment came
The strong desire to taste what bliss was there,

When lips pressed lips, and trembling mine the same ;—
Thus soul once knit to soul we stay in the delaying air."

Galeotto was the book of evil plan,
As he who wrote it will have cause to know :—
One weeping as the other tale began ;—
Swoning, I fell, in pity at their tale of woe.

PURGATORIO

Canto I

THE ARGUMENT

Dante, entering into Purgatory, recognises the Shade of Cato, whom he addresses in a long and flattering speech. Whereupon Cato, guiding to the seashore, proposes to Dante similar acts to those he first suggested to Cato.

HYDE PUBLIC
19 MAY 1935
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Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto I

IN smoother waters now, with sails unfurled,
Bark of my Genius, wing thy onward way,
And leave the cruel sea for that new world
Where souls are purged from sin, till mete for heaven are they.

Oh! Holy Muse, do thou my verse inspire,
Lifting from death to life the poet's lay;—
Calliope there, somewhat touch the lyre
For those who with the wayward nine, hopeless, unpardoned, stay.

Fair streamed the colour of the saffron skies,
With fresh'ning airs from early morning now,
That bathed, somewhat bedimmed, my aching eyes,—
Whilst Orient, smiling, saw the Star of Love aglow.

Then turned I, to the Four Cross Stars that gleamed
Above the Nations of an earlier line;—
Oh! happy they on whom such brilliance streamed,
Whilst all the heaven rejoiced that saw the glorious sign.

So soon as these regards had filled my soul,
Slowly my gaze along the horizon went;—
And turned towards that other northern pole,
Could see the glimmering light its constellation lent.

When in the dawn, and standing near was one,
An ancient man, with reverence in his face
Such as no father ever gave to son;—
Like to the holy stars I saw, in radiant grace.

O'er his pale chest there streamed his silvery beard,
And touched his glistening locks, that with it blent
From his pale forehead, and his look revered,
Down to his girdle's hem,—in mingled whiteness went.

"Who may you be, that 'gainst the stream of Hell
Have dared to pass beyond the eternal bound;
And who has guided you I bid you tell,
Or given you light to leave the dark infernal ground?"

Shaking his honest beard;—"Do the laws change,
Or has prevailed in Heaven some council new?
That the damned come, my grotto to estrange;
Who held it from my Lord,—from him my title drew."

Soon as my Duke had made to me the sign,
Reverend in gesture, humble in my speech,
Pardon I craved:—"Not for this deed as mine,
But for a Lady who from Heaven could so beseech

"My Guide; and if allowed he can explain
The situation, whilst I vouch its truth:—
Not that my fault, which gives thee so much pain,
For simply by his folly I was led forsooth.

"Only last evening was it that we met,
When hastily I bound myself to go
Where he might lead, who would no hindrance let
Till he had brought me hitherward, as thus you know.

"But first he led where wicked souls reside;—
And then proposed that I should see the rest
That purified within thy realm abide,
Till in their high attainment I might see them blest.

"Grant us thy leave to pass and seek that place,
Which, as the Refuge of my life is dear;—
Albeit, thou mayst recall another case
In Utia;—the bitterness of death thou didst not fear

"When title and magnificence were spoiled.—
Eternal Edicts do not fetter those
That live, and under Midas never toiled,
Who envious of thy Rights, had heapt on thee such woes.

"By the pale grandeur of thy vestment now,
Oh holy heart!—By all once held so dear
For the great love's remembrance sake allow;—
And in the Higher Courts thy Cause shall be made clear.

"And Marcia that I saw, be blest—when thou
Hast shown the path which leads me to my peace
In new dominion;—not my words allow,
But say a Lady out of Heaven brought my release.

"Where never more the poisonous stream can flow,
To fret me as I breathed it, in that hour
When shut within its bounds I shrank to know
The inevitable law a fact,—and felt its power.

"Go now and change thy garb for simple cloak
Of matted rush; and with washed face, retain
No mark that might betray thy personal look,
Or give a lingering hint of suicidal stain:—

"Lest at our company in some surprise,
The Officers on Dignity that wait
In Paradise, might cast suspicious eyes;
And cautiously refuse admission at the gate.

"There is an Island near, along whose shore,
In ooze and sand, the lonely rushes spread
Beneath the waves that beat for evermore;
The only plant that thrives, that looks not sere and dead.

"Let us depart; for the now risen sun,
Mounting aloft, shall light us on our way;—
And ere his downward course be yet begun,
Will aid thy safe return before the set of day."

Ended my foolish speech erewhile, but he
Silently raised me; not till with lifted eyes
I might recall my Chief, he answered me;—
"Follow my footsteps, son, far as my pathway lies.

"Soon as the level plain that slanting low,
Ends in a deep descent, I must away;
Morn brings the hour of prayer, none may forego;
And near the trembling sea I must not long delay.

"There is a secret path from here, which turns
Towards that spot of marsh and reedy ground;
Which none could ever quit unless he learns;
But in my guidance there the entrance may be found.

"There where my swarthy race 'mid sun and dew
Which smite and harm them, in communion still
Worship as was their wont and as they knew,
Thy Master's soft hands wash in the dark morass rill.

"Bring him the mournful rushes that had part,
Colouring the native tissues of my skin;
That he may learn to be expert in art,
Nor gain that shore belate, to stay unlaunched within.

"And in return, if such should be your want,
Make me a girdle;—fitting gift from you.
Marvellous! that such a kindred humble plant
Renewed, should walk the waves, where late beneath it grew."

PURGATORIO

Canto II

THE ARGUMENT

Dante and Virgil, with their Guide, standing on the shore, witness the arrival of a group of Spirits, one of whom is recognised by Dante as his friend Casella, a Poet.

Cato receives and conducts the group towards the mountain, and leaves Dante and Virgil by themselves with apparent unconcern.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto II

TO paler hues had changed the vermeiled sky;
As forth the Sun from his horizon crept,
On Salem's Heights to shine, nor mounting high;—
Pillowed on faded Rose, the belle Aurora slept.

Following its course now on the shore we stood,—
The boundary of a wide and unknown sea;—
Like those, who, powerless to attempt the flood,
Retain their heart's desire,—though vain the shore to flee.

When lo! as dawn had changed to early day,
Amid the vaporous, red, and murky air,
That further than the coast-line dared not stray,—
Borne on the waves, a light appeared, which seemed approaching there.

Sailless and swift; whereat in some surprise,
Turning towards my Chief for that he knew,
I saw a radiance in his widening eyes,
Gazing intently as it nearer came in view.

Soon I could faintly trace the form of one,
Seen only by its whiteness, and behind
Another, sheltered by his wings that shone,
Borne onwards towards us with the swiftness of the wind.

Whereat my Master Virgil spake no word
Till he had seen the whiteness of their wings,—
When at the bark afloat his soul was stirred:—
"Beware, beware! your bark but to the jungle brings

"The Angel of the Lord!—Oh, raise your hand
In token that our service is divine;
No human anger warns them from this land,
Nor will of ours to come from far and make this sign.

"Say that to them no right divine was given
As messengers to treat of mundane things;—
Nor with decrees of the unchanging heaven
Hither to cleave the air on their immortal wings."

Yet nearer still and nearer towards the shore
Approached the Light Divine, that pierced the mist:—
Whereat our dazzled eyes could look no more
Till it arrived;—a slight, swift thing that could the waves resist.

And at the helm the heavenly pilot steered,
With his credentials written in his face;—
A hundred souls, or more, with him had neared
The shore, and with one voice they raised the psalm of praise:—

"In Exitu Israel de Egypto";—
Then with the holy cross they made the sign,
And leapt ashore as in delight to go:—
With joyous steps and swift the troop towards us incline.

And fronting us began enquiring speech,
Gazing upon the shore in much surprise;—
"Tell us," they said, "the best way we can reach
The higher ground, beyond, that seems from hence to rise."

For now the sun advanced with brightening ray,
And in his arrowy flight the stars subdued,
Nor in the Pleiades' light content to stay
Had chased the lingering Goat that in mid-heaven had stood.

Then Virgil answered: "You perchance may deem
That we are well acquainted with this spot;
Though strangers only like yourselves that seem;—
By road we came so rough, return a trifling thing is not."

These souls aware that by my shortened breath
I was a mortal,—pale with wonder grew,—
And message sent with olive branch at length,
That we might speak, if so inclined, and tell them what we knew.

And as they saw me affable in look,
Appeared to think themselves in fortune's way;
And quite oblivious that the path they took
On betterment intent, might meet with some delay.

When one I noticed from amongst the rest
To eagerly press forward and embrace—
That much it moved me to return his zest;—
When in that fleeting shade I recognised his face.

Thrice did my arms essay to meet his own,
And thrice anon they fell against my breast;—
Whereat he smiled, and backward stept alone,
Whilst marvelling, as I thought, and with my face impressed.

Then I advancing followed close the shade,—
Which tenderly entreated to desist,
But in a tone I recognised,—and prayed
That it would stop and speak, and not be so dismissed.

"Because I loved thee in my mortal frame
Think not that now thou art to me less dear;
Then why detain me, if our path the same?"—
"Cassella mine! It was a different way I entered here.

"But thou, how much hast thou been robbed of time?"—
"No robbery that, I was well pleased to rise
And take my passage to another clime,
With those who stand and wait decree of the All-Wise.

"Three months I watched by Tiber's stream that laves
With the salt sea, waiting the bark's release,
In pleasure found floating upon the waves,
Whether the wing was turned; and in departure peace."

Then I to him: "If this alliance new
Has not effaced thy memory of Love Song
That ofttimes soothed me in the hours we knew,
Sing to us, weary now with travel rough and long."

"Love be by song for ever": then he sang,
In tones so soft and sweet, beyond me sent,
I and my Master, and the troop began
To feel united in a bond of great content.

As fixed we stood, attentive to the strain,
Following his notes wafted upon the air,
Then suddenly another sound again
Attracts us, in the cry of our true watchman there.

"Why linger thus? why should you be so slow;—
Detained ascending towards the rock-crowned height
Of wider vision, where you soon should know
The power of God revealed, that waits to meet your sight?"

Like as a flock of wood doves on the ground
Alighting, in a fresh green pasture fed,
Suddenly start at some unwonted sound,—
They leave their dainty meal, and in a cloud have fled.

Away, away! from all allurements here,
Which might of the great cure their souls deny,—
Startled by that assault of lingering, there
They leave their song in haste; and know not where they fly.

PURGATORIO

Canto III

THE ARGUMENT

Arrived at the foot of the mountain, they are discouraged by the difficult ascent till instructed by a troop of spirits, amongst whom is Manfred, King of Naples, mortally wounded in battle with Charles, in a Florentine war, and excommunicated for his religious opinions at the instigation of Pope Clement; afterwards ignominiously buried without the walls of the kingdom.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto III

THAT flock of spirits from our sight withdrawn,
Virgil and I the lonely pathway went;—
He, with his stride, left me behind forlorn,
In his hot haste to gain the Mount Beneficent.

Bereft of him, my Guide, and where was I?—
One moment's recollection changed his pace;
As only on his care I might rely,—
In soft contrition sought his error to efface.

The sunbeams now had pierced the mid-day sky,
Which thrust my shadow darkly on the ground;
And as I turned towards Virgil I descry
That sunbeam cleft, his form is shadowless around.

Then straightway fear, that lacked an arm of flesh,
Oppressed my doubting soul; but he replied,
With strengthening words my courage to refresh,
"Why should'st thou him distrust who was, and is thy Guide?

"'Tis evening where my buried body lies
That once had cast a shadow, there enshrined
At Naples; marvel not that from these skies
No scorching sunbeams now impediment can find.

"Suffering the torments still of heat and cold,
With those to virtue who were well inclined
And with like bodies as the men of old,
Not willingly who left their wishes far behind,

"The Mystery of the matter to indite
Seek not, ye blest! nor why in shades forlorn
So many: Plato and the Stagirite—
But then what need for Mary's Son to have been born?'

Deep thought had bowed his head, and silent mood
Broke off his speech; steadfast my face I set
To gain the mountain that before us stood,
But with ascent so steep, we might not move one step.

"And who knows now which way the pathway lies."—
There spake my Guide,—"for those who have no wings?"
Upon the summit still I fixed my eyes,
Whilst he explores the ground, that no solution brings.

Then as upon the topmost rock I gaze,
A cloud of spirits on the left I saw,
As nearer, and yet nearer,—in a maze,
Which scarcely seen to move, towards us seemed to draw.

"Look up," I said;—"these may incline to teach
The way; and where thy guidance fails, enlight."
Then he regarding me with liberal speech,—
"Fear not, my Son beloved, but I will guide thee right.

"Let us advance towards those that move so slow;
And thou, thy courage keep the steep to gain."—
When as we neared the thousand steps or so,—
Within arm's length,—awhile the troop with us remain.

"Spirits Elect! Foretasters of the peace
Which I believe you hence expect to know:
Instruct us to ascend;—and so increase
Our bliss by aiding those who else remain below."

Like as a flock of sheep, they know not why,
Follow the leader, and by threes or four
Skip;—and with downcast eyes then scent, or lie,
As does the first,—that troop their favoured leader saw.

Not at the voice of Virgil, shadowless,
They half retreat,—but started at the shade
I cast upon the ground; "Truly I will confess
Without your question," he his ready answer made:—

"This is a mortal: marvel not that this
Should break the sunbeams' force to pierce his side:—
And surely virtue's aim, in search of bliss,
Should gain reward, and find in you a certain guide."

To this appeal, responsive came a voice,—
"Go, where the steep declines the other side";—
Mid wave of hands that emphasised his choice,
The Leader of that meek and graceful flock replied;

Then turned to me: "Say if thou canst recall
My visage, and that we before have met?"—
Modest his mien, and beautiful, withal
A sabre's thrust its scar on his cleft eyebrow set.

I with his noble bearing much impressed,
Humbly disclamed such knowledge,—then he smiled,
And showed another wound high on his chest,—
"Grandson to Queen Constanza;—Manfredi, I am styled.

"And whosoe'er thou art,—to earth returned,
Seek my fair daughter, born to Arragon,
And Sicily; of me if lies were learned,
Say thou hast seen me, and the truth,—that grace is won.

"Perchance those two may find the arm that thrust
Two mortal wounds,—and my forgiveness own
Whose sins were scarlet;—but I fled in trust
To the wide arms for those who have repentance known.

"From this had Shepherd Clement taken text,
My bones had still near Benevento lain,
Nor moved to foreign ground, where the winds vex't
Moan, and unsheltered round them falls the drenching rain.

'An Excommunicant, in silent ways
Ignobly buried; yet no curses dark
Keep back the Love Divine, where hope still stays
And verdure blossoms into life within the bark.

"'Tis true that those who in contempt may stray
From Holy Church, a penalty endure;
But Heaven itself is moved by those who pray,
And souls through prayer obtain an earlier cure."

PURGATORIO

Canto IV

THE ARGUMENT

Dante is encouraged in the Society of Virgil to make the difficult ascent, and after much toil they emerge from the tangled opening in the rock to observe the sunrise. Soon after this Belacqua is recognised, a great Master of the Harp and Flute, but negligent in his affairs both spiritual and temporal.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto IV

IF through sensations of delight or grief
Some newer virtue we can apprehend,
The Soul refreshed finds in it such relief,
No other will can after this in influence blend.

A falacy will there refute had been;—
That disposition stands in us the higher;
Because a thing to hate so soon as seen
No longer holds its force in Souls that can aspire.

A servant once to this, no longer serves,
When other sounds attract the listening ear,—
In duty bound from other service swerves;
This in a new experience I had gathered here:—

Whilst listening to a soul, admired anew
Full fifty steps or more had climbed the sun,
And shortened shadow of myself it threw;—
Advancing towards us,—and in front the rest, came speaking, one

In voice well heard:—"See, here is what you seek."
And entrance there we see as might enclose,
A forked and thorny path,—such as should greet
The Villager, soon as the ripening grape its brownness shows.

An entrance possible to lead us out,—
My Duke and I, the only two left near;—
Those we had lately seen were left without;
And now on Sanlia's road, a man would Noli clear

And mount Bismantova must use his feet;—
But here a man it seemed could only fly
On the swift wings, as given to those who greet
Some fond desire, if seen afar, in light to lie.

Here through an opening broken in the rock,
Hedged on both sides we mount as in extreme,—
Both hands and feet in need to pierce the block;
And when an edge was reached in effort so supreme,

And a high bank no longer hid the way;—
"Master of mine," I said, "why further go?"
And he: "Let not fatigue our footsteps now delay,
But keep behind me close, till better paths will show."

The mountain towered in front, and in our sight
The coast beyond seemed much to be preferred
To a mid gradient in ascending height;—
And I so weary, in a way all this incurred.

"Oh, my sweet Master, thou must mount and view,
And leave me here alone, if not restored."
"My Son," he said, "put forth thy strength anew,
For one last effort will thy earlier care reward."

Thus would he speed me onward with his word,
Which seemed to breathe on me that crept so near,
As if he clothed with wings my feet so stirred;—
Till to his own delight, and mine,—could then appear

To our admiring eyes, fixed on the shore,
A sun which had arisen on our left,
Without that ardour given from its store,
Much valued of the Poet,—I as much bereft.

Said he, "Between Aquilione interposed,
Had Castor with his brother Pollox shone,—
As in some glass together, seen so posed,
A better light from each—on each below was strown.

"Then wouldst thou see the Zodiac in revolt;—
Likewise the Bear in closer walk revolve,
Not here as seen in ancient path to halt;—
Which means to say,—hadst thou the power so much to solve

"And could imagine Zion more, as where,
Seen from this mountain, they behold the sun
In equal light the same horizon share;—
Diverse in empire,—whilst had Phœton's course been run.

"Then should be known how well agrees a way
When one man with another walks beside,—
If light of intellect lead not astray!"
"In truth my master," then I said, "never before so wide

"Shone forth the light as I have just discerned;—
And where my comprehension seemed to fail;—
Nor by art circle,—called the Equator, learned
How near the sun keeps to the earth—if heat or cold
prevail.

"The reason for it, when it can depart
More northerly,—the Hebrew then can see,
Because is turned on him its hotter part.
But if it please thee, I would learn more willingly

"How far we have to journey, for this hill
Stands higher than its top I can descry."
Said he, "This mountain yet has failed thy will
To climb,—at its beginning seen to rise too high.

"But climbing brings with it the less fatigue,—
In higher mount a man most seems to fly,
Because the lighter air he then can breathe,—
As to a vessel borne,—in downward flow of tide.

"And where fatigue as known, would end for thee,
And late anxiety repose would take!"—
I answering nothing took this truth to be.—
And when his word had ceased, another,—near us spake:

"May be in sore distress you rest awhile."—
At so much invitation we had turned,
When on our left we saw a stone, as style
I heeded not before,—but as new hindrance learned.

Thus then delayed,—we see behind the stone
Some spirits negligently loll at ease;—
And one who seemed most tired sat there alone,
His head bent down,—and idly hugged his knees.

"Oh, my dear Lord," I said, "who can this be
Folded in negligence—as seen this one
Only in little Sisterhoods we see?"
He as in recognition had not wished to shun:—

"Go, follow on," he said, "brave as thou art."—
And then I knew him,—so much knowledge lent,
Might not till later on have made us part,—
And possibly when recognised, his head the higher went.

"Art thou well come," he said, "to shades, this while
The Sun left handed most his chariot leads?"—
His idle attitude first made me smile,
And his short word,—till thus my speech proceeds:

"Belacqua, not to me thy griefs unfold,
But say why art thou seated here alone,—
Or dost thou wait an Escort as of old?"
"Brother," he said, "has any other way to thee been shown

"Than holds me here, in martyrdom of wroth;—
Where seen God's Envoy at the door above;—
Whilst first I knew what Heaven to me was worth,
And much within my life could of disfavour prove,

"Its hindrance ended in one long good sigh.—
If prayers they made for me may not prevail,
Though grace within my heart had risen high,—
How may I hope to win a Light the Heavens will not unveil?"

And here the Poet served me:—"To this climb
Come now," he said, "for see how fast the Sun
From its meridian falls, in fleeting time
Covering Morocco's feet, where night has first begun."

PURGATORIO

Canto V

THE ARGUMENT

Dante assailed by a hindering Spirit leaves this at Virgil's behest; and presently they meet another troop who hasten towards them, hoping for his promised prayers when he may return to the Earth,—they having met with a violent death that allowed scarcely time for repentance. First came Antinor the descendant of the founder of the City of Padua, taken by the floods and perishing in an ignominious flight. After him Buonconte da Monterfelto, a noted Leader at the battle of Campaldino, where had Dante taken part; this lost to sight at the time, tells how, mortally wounded in flight, he was carried away by the Arno. Then lastly came Pia, a lady of Sienna, supposed to have been secretly disposed of after her marriage, for the sake of her dowry.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto V

WHILST for this cause obediently I went,
Following more steadfastly my master's climb,—
Another Spirit, fronting me intent,
Pointing a finger at me said: "Who thus would choose his time

"Whilst now the sun, left handed guides his course
And hides beneath him most the light of day:—
Who in his flesh still owns its guiding force?"—
Then as I turned towards him,—listening what he might say

I saw he fixed on me his wondering gaze
As through and through me, in the failing light.
When said my Master, "Why let soul's delay,
Bend to such muttering,—as would here detain thy flight;

"Leave all and follow me, keep close behind,
And be that tower of strength that will not shake
Altho' its top is harrassed by the wind.
Why should one man another's thoughts rebuking take

"For argument—what would impair design,
As wrath of man in its expression show?
Who might I laugh at if not following mine?"
And there my colour came,—pardon would oft bestow.

As then the path together we traverse,
Some Spirits more distinctly near we see,
The *Miserere* chanting verse by verse,—
And when these saw the sun sent not its rays through me

And to a place like this might bring dissent,—
They changed their chant into one long-drawn—
"Oh"—
And two of them as messengers were sent
In greater swiftness to us,—with a desire to know

How thus conditioned I might come so near.
Then spake my Master: "You cannot efface
A colour that has left you,—known of here;—
This man in fleshly form—as truly you retrace,

"If you had wished to see in soul delayed
This my advice: Take as good answer back—
That more of honour to his flesh be paid."—
Not then saw I the stars in Autumn's August track

In night serene,—as parted from the sun
Seen from beneath their heavenly paths forsake
More swift,—than Spirits in their swiftness run
Towards me, and at the Poet's words,—who of them spake:

"These are prayers failures,—hear and pass in haste."
"Oh soul," these cried, "so swiftly bound for bliss,
Born with like members, that in us lie waste,—
Oh, why not stay with us awhile,—our hearing miss?"

"Wherefore not wait, if in a short delay
One soul be recognised within this port;
We are all here, and hither bound to stay,—
Who to our latest hour Death had repentance brought.

"So manifest became our mortal sin,
The Light of Heaven with us could not accord,—
But penitence a pardon brought us in,
And God appeased,—who our desires could thus record.

"Alas, why go? not one be recognised
And from the world so new arrived in port?"
Then I, "Perhaps your faces that are much disguised
By grief,—my memory of you might somewhat distort;

"But in a place like this if it can please,
And I possess a destiny so new,
I give you, Oh, ye spirits, good release
As thus you say;—meantime I must be true

"To follow simply this my kindly Guide
Who world to world his guidance here could bring."
Then said the nearest, "One so close allied,
Held in so much good will should own no hindering thing.

"And I that came the foremost to thy hand
Entreat if ever thou shouldst see again
Between Romagna and of Charles the land,—
Many their courteous prayers I might of them obtain

"In Fano,—where the orisons they paid
Might rid me of a grave and sore offence,
Wherefore I fled, and was in gulphs delayed,
Where once I held my seat, in pool of blood as dense

"As when the Antinor's heart in blood streams well'd;—
In more securely as I had thought;—
Whence Este drew me when his wrath had swelled
In greater force than in a right direction brought.

"But had I in my haste to Mira fled
Where I was Sovereign Lord,—to Orico,—
I had not stayed where hence my sighs have fled,—
Held in the mire and marsh where tangled rushes grow."

Then said another, "May that wish of thine
Which leads thee to the mountain be fulfilled,
So thy good wishes added be to mine.—
I came from Monterfelto, Buonconte styled.

"None other than Giovanna holds my heart,
And for this cause I am behind, less bold."
Said I, "what force or sign made thee depart
From Campoldina's field,—thy sepulchre untold?"

"Oh," answered he, "at Casentina's feet
A stream there runs, they called Archiano,
Above a hermit's Apennine retreat ;—
Whilst at some place it lost its name in others' flow.

"My bloody footsteps left, I silently
Withdrew,—lost—as my sight, the after use of words ;
In Mary's name I breathed my last faint sigh,
And falling, left behind nothing my flesh records.

"I tell thee truth : God's angel took me there ;
And tell it to the world from whence I came ;
When he of Hell exclaimed, 'For one small tear,
Why take him from me,—but my rule makes different claim.'

"We know how often in the humid air
Rises a vapour from the watery bed,
Much loosened from the cold that kept it there,
Hastening from this to fly,—in different courses led

"The valleys fills with so much mist as hence
Gives Protomagno all its yoke to bear
In clouds,—whilst Heaven above still shines intense,
Freed from the watery vapours that have filled the air

"To fall in rain,—the earth that satisfies,—
Lending to mighty rivers greater force,
In floods that in their added strength can rise,—
Where ruin only after marks their ancient course.

"My stiffened limbs the fierce Archian found,—
Thrust me to Arno,—with the cross I made
Fast to my breast when in my dolour bound,—
And silently, in solitude my course was laid."

Said the third Spirit : "When, alas, returned
From thy late journey then remember me.
I once was Pia, from Sienna turned,
Espoused in Maremma, my jewelled hand no more to see."

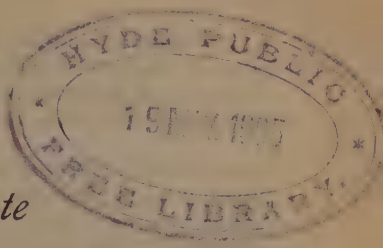
PURGATORIO

Canto VI

THE ARGUMENT

Released from his company Dante records their miserable experiences and appeals to his Guide to solve some difficulty.

As evening approaches Virgil decides not to continue the mount till daybreak; whilst they can yet perceive the shade of Sordello, the Troubador Poet, who discourses piteously with them on the tyrannical Government which had reduced Italy to its then forlorn condition.



Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto VI

WHEN separating from their game of dice,
The man who loses leaves it in dismay,—
As the last throw has ended his device,
No longer with his company desires his stay.

So there the shades retreating from my view
Left little to be stored in memory's page;—
To be regarded hence in thoughts review
As men, once given a hand, no further cares engage.

Where a designing crowd was soon shut out,
And I then freed from all my company;—
Flying from those I held so much in doubt,
From all the promises I made I felt set free.

Where stood Darezzo, from his brother's arms
Gheno of Tecco to his death had led;
And other slowly hunted in alarms;
Where too had Frederic of Navarre stood with his arms outspread.

And he of Pisa who once put to proof
The good Marzucca's fatherly regards;
Count Orso too, in his bare soul aloof
From all his envious body's foul rewards;—

Which came, as said, not by an open blow
Peter of Braccia too, who could provoke
The Lady of Brabant, much might she show,
If not to herd with souls worse off in look.

Freed from all these, in shadowy forms secure,
Where prayers of others could not yet prevail,
And early bring them a becoming cure:
I thus began, "Oh Light of mine, *not* known to fail,

"Say by what law, beneath a Heaven-sent seal,
Exprest in writing, are preferred such prayers
In such a way as souls would after heal:
Hast thou no knowledge of how vain this hope of theirs?"

"Grant me in this thy full and sure report."
Then he: "The writing which I hold has made it plain
That hope in them might find some safe resort
If so they guard it, and in healthier mind, retain.

"Whose ashes so adjudged might not yet die,
If in the fire of love some point is left,—
And there abides such souls to satisfy.
Nor might I loose a prayer to God because of a defect."

"From such a speculation truly thou
Art not shut out, and nothing more I say,
For much does truth on intellect bestow
On those not less acquired who with Beatrice stay;—

"Joined at the mountain's top, thyself shalt see,
Radiant and happy." "My good Duke," said I,
"Let us now hasten, with more speed in me,
Than when in sore fatigue the mountain loomed so high."

"For see already mists the night forestall."
"We shall reach not by this day's light," he said.
"Whilst we have greatest need to save a fall,—
Though not within thy sense the reasoning may be read.

"Meanwhile, what time we have look back on him
So nearly sunken low beneath the coast,
The former rays falling on us but dim;—
Though yet I can perceive a shade regardful of us most.

"Let us go near and speak; oh, Lombard soul
Why art thou here alone unlike the rest,
And never lose thy honest eyes control?"
This deigning no reply when to be so addressed;

All others left,—there posed in Lion's might;—
Whilst Virgil drawing nearer to him prayed
That he would show himself in better light,—
Unanswered yet, till in a softened tone he said:

"Speak of our country, of its life—'Mantua.'"
At this the shade out of his hermit lair
Sprang up before us in a different way:
"Oh, Mantuan! of thy country I,—Sordello there."

And then the two would seemingly embrace.—
"Oh, servile Italy, mere stalk to lie,
Ship without anchor, tempest torn in chase,—
Not a Provincial Lady thou—a wench of Ballatry."

"Thy gentle soul not made for this the least,—
Only to bring sweet music to the earth
In songs the citizens might on it feast;—
Not so much otherwise, in strife, misuse thy worth.

"Say, Miserable, if those who guard thy shore,
And on thy bosom after lean, if they
In any way thy peaceful joys restore;—
Within a fortress walled, in living tomb to stay.

"Vainly in stricter rein the laws supplied
Justinian;—if he left an empty throne.
Who without seat attempts his steed to guide?
Alas! that people their devoutedness so bound to own,

"Can leave the Cæsar's throne without a seat;—
Of good intention, as of God they say:
Whilst like to savage beasts, they goad and beat,—
When a correcting rein would guide in stricter way.

"Oh, German Albert, thou that had left unreined
A people, and has left them wild and fierce
Like archers by the cavalry detained;
Judgment thereby to be displaced,—foretold in star's release

"Above thy blood, that thy successor warned.
What hast thou, or the Father of thee, found
In greediness so much distress has earned,—
The Imperial garden made only deserted ground.

"Seen where the Capulets, and Montagues,
Monaldi, Filippeschi cure beyond,
Too much in colour of suspected hues;
And he the oppressor of the gentry's faults too fond,—

"Santafiore,—and as secure as they.
And Rome, thy Rome, widow bereft to be
Forever singing in her nightly lay:—
Wherefore my Cæsar, comest thou not to join my minstrelsy?

"People there see, so much of love had gained
Nothing as given in pity, seemingly
Can make the wearer of the shame ashamed:—
And might I, the high Jove invoke in dire extremity;—

"If so it be, on earth was crucified;—
Why turned from us the longer thy just eyes?
Or dost thou in the abyss of darkness hide
Some preparation that for good our schism yet applies?

"So much it schism brings to us relief—
And in the land of Italy once filled
With tyrants, not less tyrannies increase,—
Each Rustic, grown a Marcel, in a partnership he willed.

"My Florence, well for thee, if rest content,
A much digression here may touch thee not.—
Thanks to thy people, who for argument
Have not their mind for justice quite forgot.

"Though lacking council, yet they see the Bow.
A people, whilst they have it in their taste
Much to denounce the great affront they owe,
Are yet most careful of a rallying cry,—as moves my haste.

"And if it gives thee joy, thus understood,
Receive it as thy peace, its wisdom know.
If I have told thee truth, the effect be good.
Athens and Lacedæmon could ancient laws bestow

"That to civilians a good life might give;—
As with small crumbs supply the present need;
Not satisfying those who on it live,
And in November, on October's stores can hope to feed.

"Swift flies the time our memories can take
Of laws in money, custom, office-change;
Which renovated new appearance make:—
And if such be recorded, as of a good exchange,

"Within the light of it,—to be implied;—
Seen as a likeness, to be seen likewise
That not for rest, soft feathers only bide,—
But for some direful conflict may in flight arise."

PURGATORIO

Canto VII

THE ARGUMENT

Sordello conducts the Party to a Valley part way up the Mountain, where at the entrance they see by the marvellous effects of the after-glow, the seats of the repentant Kings.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto VII

AFTER his salutation to renew
Thrice or four times, Sordello honestly
For a few paces from his nearness drew,
In exclamation of surprise: "Who can you be?

"That in excess of zeal show a good will
Worthy the Soul that has come out from God;—
Whilst sepulchred, unraised, the bones are still
Octavious in his care had laid beneath the sod."

"Virgil I am, that of no fault can own
Save lack of Faith which lost me all of Heaven."
In answer, this had made himself be known—
And soon we saw how much his marvellous news had given

To him who doubtingly held its belief,—
Seeing would fain believe where doubt said no.
Till all so real,—bowing to his Chief,
He humbly clasped the knees might an inferior show.

"Glory of Latium! thou that owned the power,
A language gave us, that was not yet ours.
Immortal prize, where I had dwelt the dower:—
What merit or what grace was there beyond its powers!

"If I am worthy now to hear thy speech,
And from the Inferno thou, where is thy cell?"
"Through all the circles that such realms can reach
I came," this said, "and with the Eternal griefs remain to dwell.

"Where Heavenly virtue led I with her went,—
Not lost for doing, but that left undone,
Which lacked the sun with thy desires that blent;—
In tardier beams than thou, I saw, its course to run.

Nor to a place I fell where torment lies:—
Only a dimness, and the plaintive cry,
Which speaks not woe, as only breathed in sighs
Of Innocents,—their biting teeth withheld unwittingly.

"With such to stay, and undistinguished see
Three holy virtues in the garb of one:—
Knowing no difference have followed three;—
But say, canst thou direct us straight to Purgatory begun?"

This in reply: "We find no certain trace,
But wander up, and through this valley down:—
A Guide, if so, but not beyond this place.
Yet see you not already coming night can day discrown.

"A higher mount would not delight inspire,
So shall we rest and make a short sojourn
Where we shall see some Spirits can retire,
And whilst we rest with them their pleasures may discern."

"Who can these be," murmured some now in sight,—
"The mountain to ascend, the less incline,
And heeding others, lose thereby their might."
Whereat Sordello, on the ground there drew a sign.

"Mark this," he said, "nor further from it stray,
Whilst from your path the sun's light is withdrawn;—
To gain a point might nothing else delay,
But through the darkness rest, and there await the dawn.

"Not mine the wish to stay a willing climb,—
Only for rest awhile with those below
To pass with them an intermediate time,
The whilst the horizon hides that so desired to show."

Agreeing much with this my Seignor said:
"Lead thou as best may suit us, waiting day,
Though our delight thereby the more delayed."
Whilst from this spot we saw removed deep valleys lay,

Furrowing with distant seams the mountain's brow,—
"Within that plain," he said, "a bank's retreat,
We wait till newer day brings back its glow."
Between this steep and plain, a crooked pathway's beat

Led up to where, closed from the mountain's edge
More than by half, its sloping side retires—
Where splendid gold and ruby's silver ledge,
Revealed a spot where day in glory's hues expires.

Fresh as set emeralds, in an hour that brings
To herb, as flower, the passing glow that gives
An added lustre, so much parting flings
Victorious, in the wealth of colour each receives.

Salve Regina, where the spirits sing:—
And further was no mingled scent of flowers,
Because the Sun none others there would bring
Than could be nestled with him in the passing hours.

"There," said the Mantuan, who could hither fly,
"Beyond such colour I would not be guide;
Though further through the valley we descry
A number larger, than in tears could here abide.

"That one we see sits higher than the rest,
Seems to repent a duty left undone,
Though not so wide mouthed—voiced in his request,—
Rudolf the Emperor, holding much of power in one

"Had healed a wound, nor let Italia die,—
Neglectful leaving others to revive.
The one to comfort him, who tries close by,
Was once disputant of a land whose waters strive

"To reach to Elbe, as Elbe to ocean runs;
Attachero named, in swaddling clothes to lie
Had better stayed, seen Stanislaus his son,
Deep bearded, lounging at his ease in luxury.

"This is Nasetto, straightly counciling him,
And sits beside him with benignant look,—
That died in flight, when broke the Lily's stem;
See how he beats his breast, as if in all forsook!

"The other frequent as with this in sighs,
Holds in his hand his cheek, encouched to lie:—
The bane of France,—in a parental guise
Knows how his vicious life was sunk in ribaldry.

"Which brings the grief, such places here disclose.
That one robust of limb, seen nearly placed
To him,—the other with the high-set nose,
Had in his girdle held the virtues strictly braced.

"If after him, as King his son had reigned,
The young man seated near him at his side,—
Virtue, as vase from vase, had been retained,
Not as to other heirs was meeted out beside.

"For James and Frederick holding the decree,
Better had failed in heritage of line.
How seldom seen, grown from the parent tree,
The worthy branch, so much of hope could there incline

"To fix a name in other name's record.
At this Nasuto comes to meet my word,
As Peter, with him, sings in strict accord;—
To Puglia and Province had left their late discord.

"How much the seed is better than the plant,
We see in Beatrice, and Margarite,—
With Constance, who a husband could supplant.
Seated alone, in harmless life, the King in sight

"Whose branches better, England's Arrigo!
Whilst lower, his accustomed seat to take
Beyond court usage,—Marquis William's show,
Whose war made Canoverse and Monferato weep."

PURGATORIO

Canto VIII

THE ARGUMENT

Evening: but hearing no vesper bell Dante is consoled listening to the concluding hymn of the Church Service, that entreats the guardianship of Angels. With Virgil and Sordello he enters a shaded valley, protected from the serpent by two Angels of Innocence. There he meets and recognises Nino of Gallura, a leader of the Guelph party,—betrayed by his uncle Ugolino, and whose widow had afterwards married (blamelessly as was considered) Galcazzo, Viscount of Milan; the armorial bearings of these two being respectively, a Cock, and a Viper. He notices for the first time a different appearance in the Polar Constellation; and meets Corrado Malaspino, a Ruling Judge of Valdemigra, who predicts the hospitalities in store for him at the hands of his relative Marchess Marcello,—which came to pass in the year of his exile, 1307.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto VIII

THE evening hour had come when in God's care
Those voyagers that bid sweet friends adieu,—
If day's expiring knell float on the air,
In fond remembrance will their former scenes review.

Soon as I thought how vain was listening then,
There suddenly appeared a soul to rise,
That with uplifted hand bade me come near,—
Indifferent to all save God, eastward had turned his eyes,

And with closed palms pointed to that best pleased ;—
Whilst in his notes *Te lucis anti* rung
Such sweetness, from myself I felt released—
As others joined devoutly in the hymn thus sung.

Reader, may so thy eyes with truth be lit,
They pierce the meaning hid within this book.
In that united band was plainly writ
Same expectation, in their humble, pallid look.

Two angels then I saw towards us fly,
And each a flaming sword, point broken bear ;—
Fresh as the verdant leaves when Spring is nigh,
Invested with their trailing wings they fanned the air

One over us, and near, sustained in flight;—
The other nearest to the shore, could fold
A gathered multitude within their sight,—
And I could well discern their heads of glistening gold.

Yet in their faces, in their eyes I miss
A Knowledge that for them was too profound;
"Both had on Mary's bosom hung and this"
Sordello said, "the vale they guard—a serpent found."

Then I who knew not yet the way to take,
Strictly accosted him who had my care,—
All trembling, would his shoulder refuge make.
Sordello then:—"This shady vale we pass—no need beware;—

"Give thanks to those who guard us in it well."
Scarcely three steps he made when we descend,
Where soon I noticed one intently dwell
Upon my features, memories back would send.

Though daylight now was quenched in evening air,
Not yet had darkness hid his eyes and mine;—
Towards me he came, as I to meet him there;—
"Nino, thou courteous Judge, I greet thee at this sign,

"As not with Kings,"—the best salute I knew,
When he rejoined, "How long is it since thou
Ascended to the Mount, deep waters through?"
"Oh, only since the morn, such places sad I know,

"My life the first to live, till this acquired."
Soon as they heard me such an answer send,
He, and Sordello with amaze inspired,
Looked like to men who lose their way and backward tend.

The one to Virgil, and this other one
Towards him there seated near: "Up Conrad see
How God gives grace to those who hither run."
Then soon returned from him, again he spake with me.

"Thou that in ways peculiar crossed the strait
By grace divine, the first, may be, so led,
With none to guide where vast of waters wait;—
Tell Giovama mine to come where Innocents they bid.

"Her mother, I believe not loves me now,
Since she had changed the widow's band of white,
And when convenient made another vow,
To show how faintly burns in woman love's delight,

"If eyes through mist the spark of love relume;—
Not in such lovely sepulchre interred
The Viper, mark the Milanese assume,
As would have made for her Gallura's sonorous bird."

Thus spake, and in his aspect seemingly,
The zeal that singed his heart in measure so.
Towards heaven I turned in its clear depths to see
The stars that near the Pole had seemed to move more slow,

As if such nearness could retard their flight.
Then said my Duke, "What now absorbs thy view?"
And I, "these stars, the Three with added light,—
Around one central star alone their flames renew."

"Then," he replied, "those other stars, the Four,
As seen this morning are now hid in power;—
Whilst these have risen in their lustre more."
This said,—Sordello turned to him, and speaking lower,

"See there our foe," with this a sign would make;
And in a spot whence seemingly had fled
Our valiant little guard, behold the snake!
The same perhaps which gave to Eve her bitter bread:—

Amongst the leaves and flowers left evil track—
Licking beast-like its smooth and wheedling way,
Showing its head, and then again its back;—
I did not see our Angels, therefore I could not say

How they were moved, or if from hence, to where :—
But swift as Hawk, seen in the grass its prey,—
Feeling their verdant wings had fanned the air,
The Serpent fled : unseen the Angels went their way.

The Judge who from among the spirits came,
Soon as he heard the call the conflict saw,
Without the power to aid ; as if the flame
Which led thee hitherward, and higher, needed more

The wax that fed, to mount the enamelled sky !
Then this commenced to me : "If thou canst bear
From Valdemagra news, or parts near by
Authentic, tell it me, who once held Lordship there.

"Conrado Malaspina called, but mind
That was my father's name, who to the son
Transmitted with his name a love refined."
Then I,—"though in your parts my course has not yet run,

"I long have minded of your gentle sway ;
Has not all Europe with your praises rung,—
Renowned of Lords and Country,—so to say
You know it not, is, that you have not been among.

"And this I swear, if I should make record
Amongst your honoured people, I would say
They are not stingy of their Purse and Sword,
Which as a native privilege they always pay.

"For there we see how Kings the world can twist,
When in the right, they evil ways despise."
And he—"Go now,—not seven times shall the sun resist
And force the unwilling Ram out of his couch to rise,

"Till good opinion framed in this discourse,—
As of my kindred courteously expressed,
Shall in their midst be clenched with greater force,
When, if so be, the course of judgment will not there arrest."

PURGATORIO

Canto IX

THE ARGUMENT

In the dawn Dante reclining on the grass with his companions, has a mysterious dream. Virgil at the same time having a vision they are encouraged to proceed on their way towards the huge block of stone where sits a Porter of Angelic appearance, who at Virgil's earnest solicitation allows them to enter.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto IX

NOW had old Titone parted from his spouse,
That pallid on the Eastern cliff remained
To watch how stirred from slumberous repose
This, in the paths of light to Heavenly heights attained.

Her brow begemmed with stars that have ensigned
The Scorpion in a constellation old;
That with its tail takes pleasure from mankind,—
A bane, in that it brings with it so much of cold.

The while we two in safety passed the night,
And over us another's wing had bent,
I with more Adam in my fleshly plight,
Reclined upon the grass to dream, where Five we went.

In such an hour as brings with its sad lay
The swallow that in earliest mornings care
Perhaps has memory of some woeful day,—
That blent with it a thought of mine, as Pilgrim's share.

There came the dreams that had more faintly told
A Vision which has held so much Divine:—
Whilst in descent an Eagle winged with gold
Flew near me from the height, as in some care of mine

Appearing as in coming out from there
Abandoning his own, like Ganymede
When he was snatched to be Commissionare ;—
So that I thought, perhaps he feels too much in need

Of sustenance he owes to his high place,
And thus disdains to come to me the nigher :—
Whereat he nearer came as if to face,—
Terrific, as a bolt from Heaven, he snatched me to his fire.

And then it seemed that this, and I together,
Alike in ardour of our genius borne,—
Imagination fired not less in either,
Had then awakened me from sleep ;—my slumber torn.

Not much unlike Achilles, in his fate,
Who looked around him in uncertainty
Of how he came into his new estate,—
Where in her arms his mother bore him hurriedly.

And afterwards the Greeks disparted him.
What most annoyed me was a fear it sent
The dream might vanish, or become more dim
To man, who too much dreads a flock's disseverment.

At such a time as only comfort saw
The sun was higher, and two hours were fled,—
So turned me in my hope towards the shore :—
When, "Have no more of fear," my Seignor kindly said.

"Secure, in that we now have gained a point ;—
Regret not thou, but rally all thy might,
Since now with Purgatory thou art conjoint :—
See there the Rock that bounds, enclosing it from sight,

"Which having entered, thou and I must part :—
In the white dawn as it precedes the day,
And whilst thy soul was turned in sleep apart,
Amidst the flowers there came to me, further than this away—

"A lady saying:—'Lucia is my name:—
Leave thou to me henceforth the man who sleeps,
That I may guard him in his life the same.'—
Sordello with the gentle souls at distance keeps.

"And so she took thee:—she so beamed with light,
As from the Heaven, that following her eyes
The rock which had opposed thee held in sight
A door, the entrance through no longer there denies.

"That vision fled, I saw of her no more."—
Then I, who in a doubtful dream was left,
So much of comfort from his words could draw,
As afterwards fulfilled, that near to him I kept;—

My mind so changed, that without further care
I followed in his steps none other way.
Reader, remark how much the more I dare
Exalt my theme,—so shouldst thou marvel less at my delay.

As we approach, we see the block's surround,
And as at first appeared, a cliff of stone:—
Where now a deep partition wall had bound
A door, the entrance through, three steps led down,

Which great diversity of colour wore;—
Yet had no Porter fixed a motto there:
And as our sight was widened, one we saw
Seated upon the stone, much sovereignity to wear,

As in a face is not expressed by words;—
And this a naked sword held in his hand,
Which fell in light on me, reflected towards,—
That by its dazzling rays, his features less I scanned.

With great authority he spake:—"What is your will?
And whence have you arrived unto this place?
Take care lest I come nearer to you still."
And then my guide:—"A Lady out of Heaven knew of this case."

Immediately he answered :—"Go straightwise,
See there the entrance, and the door you find;
She who has passed you has had good advice,"—
Then recommencing, in his courtesy most kind :—

"Come and ascend our stair in welcome true."
So on went :—the first step we could gain
Was polished marble clear and white to view,
Wherein I was reflected, not without secret pain.

The second with a ruddier hue was blurred,—
In polish less and of a coarser grain,
As slightly burnt and cracked, led to a third,
Of Porphry,—that blood red blazed from out its vein.

There on the top, God's Angel set his feet,
A rock of adamant to me it meant;—
While on the steps with much good will we meet
My Duke as turned towards me said :—"Ask humbly his consent,

"If is allowed approach to him more near."—
When at his holy feet devout I fell
He mercifully raised me up from there;—
But first three sighs he breathed into my breast, as well

Upon my forehead with the sword's point drew
Seven times the letter P.—"This wash away,
When thou hast entered, hide it from the view.
As ashes or dried earth in caverned holes that stay."

A colour went from out his vestment when
From under it two keys he could unfold,
The one of gold, the other silver,—when
At first he showed the white,—and then the yellow gold

Each fitting in the door, I was content.
"If one of these," he said, "fails to unlock,—
The key as misdirected will prevent
An entrance by the narrow way behind the block.

"Of one take care,—the other not despise,
For Art, and Genius after, deeper grows;—
A knot well loosened afterwards unties.
This gift I owe to Peter,—if I err towards those

"To each of whom I open, I must say
The people at my feet intreat me so."
Then pointing to the sacred door the way,—
"Enter, but take good heed, nor look back where you go."

Then as upon its harsh distorted hinge
That Guardian opened up a Kingdom rare,
As metal so resounding can unhinge,—
When with less harsh a sound, good metal has more care,—

I listened to the tones the first I greet:—
Te Deum laudamus, which came to me
As sound mysterious though exceeding sweet,
Imagination had so bound indisuably;—

That brought back once again a melody
My soul had hitherto held in great store,—
The Organ and the Chants could bring to me
In words that had some meaning still, the less or more.

PURGATORIO

Canto X

THE ARGUMENT

They here perceive another block interrupting the way: this of the whitest marble, where Nature has chiselled Emblems of past and future history.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto X

NOW had we passed the threshold of a door
That dis-associates from evil life,
Because those things the soul had loved before,
Were looked upon as straight, where crookedness was rife.

Had I but turned my eyes away from here,
How should I in my life excuses find;—
The while we tread a stony path, and where
It parted in two ways, as if of but one mind,

Like waves that nearer come and then divert:—
"Convenient to be used if with some art:"—
Commenced my Duke, he being much expert
In all of this, and that, in which he late had part.

And now the darkness hid so much the way,
That first the moon's beams rising from their bed
Brought back remembrances of a delay
Deliverance that had wrought, as through a needle's head.

And where an opening now had set us free,
The Mount above, behind us, then arose:—
I wearied of it,—both in uncertainty.
Waited a little, whilst I took an earned repose.

More solitary that the way deserted seemed
Upon a shore that had the wind confined
Another block arose, of space we deemed
Would take a measure of three mortals, skill inclined:

And as my eyes might wander right or left,
This everywhere apparently surround;—
Whereto our footsteps hastened not,—bereft
Of any entrance through a door, as lately found.

This seemed of whitest marble, so adorned
With sculpture as knew not Policleto,
Where nature's chisel carved as if art scorned
The Angel that to Earth came down Decrees of Peace to show,

That many years of weeping held from view;—
With such a cry as opened Heaven to part,—
And afterwards appeared to us not true,
So much entangled, and in height a thing apart.

One might have known and sworn that this said "Hail":—
Because was opened up herein so much
Imagination in it could unveil
Of highest love, that holds within the key of touch;—

Which had impressed me as if speech could tell;—
"Behold the Handmaid of the Lord," so wrought
As had the wax a figure taken well.
"No longer in this place must be detained thy thought:"

Said my sweet Master then, himself had led
Into a place which holds the hearts of men:
Because he saw me moved he this had said,—
Knowing how long I might delay for Mary then.

So that he bade me read as off from there,
Another story graven in the stone:—
And if I went as Virgil held me near,
It might be only for this cause,—his eyes were mine alone.

Both of us had on mother's milk been fed,
On food and drink beneath one holy arch,—
Though not in mission of one office led,
As was apparent now, where came in lengthening march

A numerous multitude of seven sets,
Whereof some sang as No,—the others Yes,—
All in the smoke of incense that begets
Imagination through the eyes, and nose not less

To such as in it no discordance see:—
Where had preceded them the blessed vase
Which held aloft the humble Psalmody:—
All of it more or less depicted in this place.

Another Effigy in contrast seen:—
A mighty palace, Michol could admire,
That like a Lady dispossessed had been:—
My feet then moved away further from this desire:

From Michol's palace graven in the white,
To story that upheld in glory high
A valiant Roman prince, that came in sight,
Whose valour Gregory had displaced in his high victory:—

I speak of Trajan as that Emperor;
And of a Widow whom he had bereaved;—
As there depicted in her weeping sore,
Whilst closed around, in crowd, his cavalry proceed,

Their standard floating golden in the wind:—
That miserable one amidst to creep,
Seeming to say:—"My Lord, I have resigned
My son for hunger, and am left alone to weep."

To this he makes reply:—"Expect from me
Much in return:"—She then "Oh, Seignor mine,
How many people in like grief will be
If thou return not?"—He, for gift like thine

"What is the debt I owe?" thereat she said
"Will any good to me blot out thy debt?"
"Take comfort, then in duty solved!" he said;—
Convinced in that where justice urged, I pity met.

Those who have never known this newer thing
Produced as speech, remain in dubity,
I fondly gazed on that with it could bring
To the imagination such a true humility,

And in a fable found so much to love.
See how a Poet can implant his feet:—
How silently amidst a crowd can move,
And from his high ascent unwilling makes retreat.

My eyes as on a marvellous thing intent,
Seeing a novelty of so much charm,
I wished it might not further off be sent;—
Nor fear I, Reader, thou in thy despair should harm

A good intention, which thou yet canst hear,
When God has willed it that the debt be paid.
Nor heed the form in which I put it there,
Think of what follows:—think what default were made

If the grand sentiment no further go.
Then I commenced:—"Master, those I perceive
As moved towards us, are like none below
That I have ever seen, or else my eyes deceive."

He then:—"The grave condition of these, crippled so
By torture of the Earth, was not perceived
At first, but looking at them more intent—I know
As faces speak in stone, they blow for blow received."

Oh, ye proud Christians, bowed in misery so,
From whose dull sight the way has been shut out,
Yet confident that you mistook it now,
Why do ye not perceive we are the worms of doubt.

Born to be made the angel butterflies,
That fly towards justice but without defence;
How is it that your souls exultant rise,
And ye yourselves entombed within a worm's suspense?

Seen like to those in whom formation fails;—
On sunshine to be fed, and yet enceiled
In a top garret, that such things impails,—
Only as yet on hands and knees to be revealed.

Much less disguised, should cure in them be wrought:—
As cripples then I saw them, bending low,
The more or less upon their backs they brought;—
With less impatience in their cry:—"*No further can we go.*"

PURGATORIO

Canto XI

THE ARGUMENT

The Deformed to be transformed:—Dante interviews the shades of some he knew as Warrior and Artist; after having listened to an intercessionary prayer made for the living whilst on earth.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XI

"OUR Father, who hast still in Heaven thy name
Yet more beloved, Oh! may thy kingdom come,
On Earth to be, as in thy Heaven the same:
Thy children's wills, dear Lord, alone like thine become.

"So may thy kingdom's peace in them be found:—
If not, their genius all will be in vain;—
And as Hosannas that the angels sound,
As sacrifice to thee,—thy men like bliss attain.

"Feed us with manna, a continual good;—
Lest should a harsh and barren wilderness
Tempt us to look behind for other food,
As we have suffered from its evils, not the less.—

"May each to each grant pardon as thou dost;—
Benignantly, not merits to record;—
Our virtue easily subdued, nor trust
To the Old Adversary's measure any earned reward.

"Freed now from him that lately urged us so:—
This last, dear Lord, not for ourselves we pray,
Who have no further care in this to know;—
Rather for those we left behind in their delay."

This to himself,—that good resemblance made
To such we fancied bent beneath some weight
In the last cornice:—this a prayerful shade,
The darkness of a world would purge when hid from sight.

If that be good for us, as often said
And heard, by us,—now held in powerful sway,
How could a deepened root for them be prayed?
Rather, should help be given to wipe such scars away

As they brought hither:—so the world relieved
These might go out as circling stars to stay:—
Alas, that justice should be so bereaved
Of piety, that wishing guides the wing in either way:—

Showing how much a ladder, made to lean,
Seems all the shorter, less its openings show,—
That ignorance might mount it as unseen.
This one who felt a carnal weight of Adam near him, now

Advanced towards me, as if he would compare
How moderate his desires against his will:—
The words he spake to me should I declare
Would not be understood of men if followed still.

But this he told us:—if our way was bent
More to the right, as coming from the shore,
Perhaps a living man might make the ascent;—
If we could find a path that we had left before.

Now as I stood beneath the cornice stone,
Convenient most it seemed to bow my head,
Lest a superior height too much be shown:—
This man, who seemed to be as living, yet was dead

Spake when I looked on him to recognise,
And sympathy express for so much woe:—
"I was a Latin born"—thus he replies
"Of a great Tuscan father, Aldobrandisco:—

"Yourself unknown, if not a name with you.
Such ancient blood and all the works I read
Of my great sire, had made my pride to grow,
So that I thought I had not common birth received.

"And other men at so much distance kept,
That thus I fell, as all Sienna knows
A common soldier, of my life bereft:—
I am that Ombert, not the less suberb than those

"My comrades, and thus treated for their sin,—
Well knowing I for them this burden bear;—
And in so much God satisfied therein,
I was not found amongst the living, so much death could wear."

Whilst listening to him with my head bent low:—
Another than the one who spake with me,
Twisted beneath a weight less face could show,
And scarcely recognised,—though low I bent to see,—

There fixed on me his eyes, as hinderingly
In their obedience thus to be restrained:—
He saw me though, spake, straightway, called on me:—
"And art thou Odrigi?" I said, "thy name retained.—

"Ogoblio's glory, Artist honored in
Illumination? Paris had acclaimed."
"Brother," he said, "more joy is given within
The leaves, Bologno's Artist Franco, since has claimed.

"The honour all was his, mine but a part,—
Nor was I courteous to him as so skilled;
Seeing his exellcence, had burn't my heart
When more suberbly I had seen the pages filled.

"Nor had I now been here, but sense of sin
Had given me strength towards God to stretch my wings:
Oh! what vain glory mortals strive to win
Where on the hard hill-top they find no verdure springs.

"The while they think Ciambue holds the rank,—
And now Giotto is the cry of all,
Through him the fame of others since has sank;—
And now, from Guido to another, flowers of rhetoric fall.

"Maybe some else will in their style arise,—
Make use of the fine nest, and both eject.
Is not the tumult of the world's disguise
Like to a gust of wind that changes in effect

"As from which side it seems to blow—what fame
Shalt thou have more if an old age divide
Thee from the flesh,—if thou art still the same
As swadling clothes and pap had never left thy side?

"What are a thousand years? their fleeting pace
Is shorter than the twinkling of an eye
Within the circle of unending space.—
The one who spake with thee the first, a passer by,

"Was that high Tuscan that has scarcely left
A murmur in Sienna of his praise,
Where he was Sire, what time distructions theft
Had seized a Florence rabble in her costlier days.

"All your distinction is the colours worth
That comes and goes with herb's fertility,
Then takes discolour from the acrid earth."
I then as listener said:—"Such true humility

"Speaks to my mind of swolen pride removed:—
But who is that which spake to thee just now?"
"Provenza Solvani, the man who once presumed
To take all from Sienna hand's full would allow,—

"Thus had he died a death without repose;—
For satisfaction, restitution made,
When he had dared to take too much from those."
Then I:—"If spirits that repentance have delayed

"Close to the edge of life, nor yet ascend,—
How stay they here when prayers will not prevail
To hasten on the time of their amend,
Yet of so much enlargement from this place could hail?"

"When life more glorious seemed," he answering said,
"In liberation from Sienna's camp,
All that had gone before, fixed, here had stayed:—
[1] So that his friend from Carlo's prison he had freed, could stamp

"A trembling consciousness through every vein.
And more I say not, darkened in my speech;—
But where thou goest, afterwards make plain
To neighbours, how their works impede the paths they reach."

[1] The lord and commander of the army, he so far humbled himself as in person to interest the people of Sienna to raise the ransom for his friend, detained in prison by the conqueror. And this act was considered to atone for his ambition and pride.

PURGATORIO

Canto XII

THE ARGUMENT

They walk among the sepulchral monuments of bygone ages. Afterwards an Angel appears who directs them to an opening in the Rock, whence they must ascend the Mountain by the steps. Dante's impatient, proud dismay is overcome, and then he finds one of the marks is obliterated from his forehead.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XII

AS oxen yoked together, I, and he,
Far as my gentle Teacher would allow ;—
But when He said—"Leave this and follow me,
Only one set of oars and sails the seas must plough."—

Immediately I left, and took good heed,
In all simplicity to follow Him,
But found my pace must quicken to the speed
Of His alacrity, that seemed on air to swim.

"Upon the ground beneath us here," he said,
"Fix straight thy eyes, for under we descry
Memorials that are rendered to the dead ;—
'Twere good for thee, in life, to tread where griefs can die."

How could I but regard, where memory raised
Above the entombed of earth the sepulchre
To those who had before-hand been effaced,—
And mostly in an anguish wept for there.

Or held in memory for their pity's sake,—
Much of resemblance saw I to the same,
That artists figure in such works they make,
And all of which I left behind when to the Mount I came.

Him, I could see, more marked than all beside,
Created noblest—from his heavenly birth ;—
Fallen to earth, like lightning turned aside.
In other part—Briarius, iced in cold descent to earth.

I saw the Thymbræan god, Pallas, and Mars,
All armed, nor yet around their Father strown,
As His gigantic and dismembered stars :—
And Nimrod at the foot of his great flood alone

Regardful of the pride of Sienna's plain.
Oh, Niobe ! thou with the doleful eyes—
I saw thee as a sign set there again,
Between thy sons, the Seven—in stone that lies !

Oh, Saul ! how much appropriate seemed thy place,
To those who saw thee dead in Gilboa,
And felt no grief, but joyed in thy disgrace ;
Oh, fond Arachne, too, within thy cobwebbed store

I saw thee, in the midst of an attire
That only evil for thyself had made.
And, Rehoboam, without threatening ire,
But full of doubt—from his first care not now allayed.

And on the hardened pavement seen below,
How Alcmæon could mother's love retain,
Which a misplaced adornment seemed to show.—
And there Sennachrib, by his sons within the Temple slain.

There shown the ruin and the crude belief
Of Tomyris in Cyri, when she said—
"Blood-thirsty, thou shalt have thy full relief."
How, too, the Assyrians from their field of battle fled

With Holofernes from amidst them slain
Not waiting for the relics of the dead.
There saw I Troy in ashes still the same :—
Oh, Illion ! how base and vile thy sign I tread.

What pencil held the master of that style,
Which could retrace the shades, and treat them here

As if some subtle genius wrought the while:—
The dead amongst the dead, yet living, to appear!

Nor less observed by me the truth who saw,
As lowly bent my head to meet the view,—
I that so proudly trod the way before
The sons of Eve—and more inclined to evil ways than true.

Whilst further up the Mount we must ascend,—
And further had the sun now spent his way,
Nor satisfaction to the soul could send:—
When he who saw no cause longer for a delay

My head had bade me lift—"Not long," he said,
"Have we to linger in such-like suspense;
See where an Angel that has been delayed.
Would now approach us, that has turned away

"The handmaid of the Hours, the sixth that serves.—
With reverant look adorned, as might explain
How love could take less love than it deserves,
In an excess of brightness that must be restrained."

I was much used admonishment to claim
For losing time, that of this heed I took,—
When nearer to us that fair creature came,
White clad, and tremulous, the morning's star in look;

With arms outspread, expanding wings to meet,
That said—"Whence come ye—you that are so near
The steps, and cannot yet your flight complete?"—
Whilst this announcement made the fact appear more clear.

"Oh, gentle Humans, native born to fly,
Why should a breath of wind your flight delay?
See where the rock is rent, my wings too nigh
It bent, and promised my return a better way."

On the right hand we came along the Mount,
Where stands a church that once a conquering race
Had reared to watch and keep the Rubiconte,—
All broken the ascent, a daring path to trace

Along the staircase, where in iron old
Are safely kept the manuscripts that lie
Within the enclosure, from the Robbers bold:—
So inaccessible it seemed to mortal eye.

Where here and there was made a higher road;
Nor saw we there a solitary man,
But "*blessed are the poor in spirit*" flowed
In song, where no desire for sermon then began.

Ah, how diverse it was to be so placed
Beyond the Infernals, and wherein they sing
Who enter, with all fierce lament effaced!
Now should the mountain's top these holy stairs begin:—

As seemed to me a lack of strength and waste,
Nor surely a reward for such a climb;
And, "Master," said I, "why has faulty haste
So much deceived me that fatigue is met this time?"

When he explained: "The P, to be erased
In upward flight that is so near thee now,
Shall then be known as one the rest effaced;—
The whilst thy swifter feet no more fatigue can know,

"Finding thy all of pleasure to be led,"
So then my temper, which had proved so proud,—
And not by any knowledge in my head
That had suspicions by the hundred there allowed,—

Was by the hand of my kind Leader led,
Who sought and found me, and his office filled;—
Not there to be by anything I said
Discouraged from a height that so much good instilled.

And with my finger pointed right, I felt
In my simplicity, one scar, that styled
My forehead,—where six others had been delt
Was now effaced; whereat my Duke regardful, smiled.

PURGATORIO

Canto XIII

THE ARGUMENT

Virgil invokes the sun that Dante may be directed in an untried path, when they hear mysterious Spirit voices in the air.—Continuing their way as directed nearer to the Shore, Dante observes with much surprise, a group of Grey Friars, assembled under the shelter of the cornice; passing these he meets and converses with Diana, a Sienese lady of quality and a representative Spirit.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XIII

TURNED from our course we found another way,
Where from its foothold further rose the Mount,
That in ascent brings to it healthier day,—
Another Cornice *less* compact here to encount;—

Not shadowed with an imagry's design,
But leading from it nearer to the shore:—
A stony path withal that kept its sign,
And all the livid colour of its nature wore.

"If Guides we wait," my Poet thus began
"The time of our ascent might much delay:"
His eyes upraised then fixed upon the sun
Which lower from the centre turned the other way:—

"Oh thou sweet light, beneath whose kind controul
On a new path I enter, lend thy aid,
Show me how best I may conduct this soul,—
Thou that hast warmed the Earth, its Sovereignity has made.

"And should some other motive prompt him near
Not always in thy loving beams to stay:—
As one amongst a million to be there;—
Only a little while may this his will delay."

Then towards us Spirits flew,—not felt the least
Because unseen, that with their speech beneign
Invited to the Supper of Love feast;—
When first, one in dissension cried,—"they have no wine."

So fled behind us, than the others more
In distance, that the sound thence could not send:
Another as a cry,—"Orestes" bore:
And near:—"Father," I said, "What can these words portend."

And whilst I spake, another voice we heard:—
"Love those from whom you have to suffer harm."
Said the good Master then:—"this much infered,—
The sin of Envy's scourge Love must disarm."

I had preferred some other word was said,
And yet believed it might be good advice,
That first in pardoning of our pathway sped:—
And in a healthier air along it fixed my eyes.

When presently, some, seated near we found
Had of a lengthened grotto service made,—
Amazed, I recognised them cloaked around
Scarce different in their colour from the Rock in shade.

And as they cried to Mary—"pray for us,"
To Michael, and to Peter, and all Saints,
I could but think that if as mortals thus
Upon the Earth they begged and made their loud complaints

Scarce would be found so hard of heart the men
As to refuse compassion needed there;—
And nearer had I gazed upon them when
I could discern their heavy eyes might all their griefs declare.

In sackcloth vile they seemed to me as drest,—
And each on others shoulder lent for aid,—
As these against the rock more closely prest,
One found his cloak was gone,—and at it sore dismayed

Entreated of the others for their care;—
When one, another's cape upon him threw;—
Was it so much of sorrow they could share
That the mere sight of it, than words, their pity drew?

Like to those orbs far hidden from the sun,
Only as shades I speak of them, as now
The light to shine on them had not begun,—
But where a band of iron binds their eyelids so

As restive steeds that quietude must take.
Others I saw beyond them in extreme;—
Nor comprehension could their measure take;—
So that I turned for council where would greater wisdom seem.

Much might he know if this would speak,—but dumb,
Nor answer would he give to my demand;—
"Be brief," he said, "lest argument succumb."
For Virgil had not to the Cornice led to stand

Uncrowned expositor of things that hide.
For elsewhere might be seen some shades devout,
Not like to these unclean, washed on one side:
Oh let me turn to them, the gentle hearts remote,

Beginning just to see the higher light,
Their sole desire to be within its care,—
So much of froth had grace removed from sight
Within the conscience, that the unchecked full glare

Could thence ascend in the enlightened thought.
"Tell me if those (held by me once so dear),
If life, that is amongst Italians brought,
May be by them held good when I again appear?"

"Oh Brother mine, each is a citizen
Of one true City:—what if thou dost say
That Italy such lives imperils?" Then
Came as response within:—"A little while, there thou must stay":—

In feeling which can never leave me now.
Another shade besides the others there,
Seemed as with look expectant :—"Asks't thou how ;"—
This higher held the chin, as if in light more clear.

"Spirit," I said, seeming as such to rise,—
"If this thou art, an answer deign to me,
Tell me thy name and how this place applies?"
"I was Sienese born," she said, "with others else to be

"Cleansed and restored as those life's jesters are ;—
That cry to others who will not come near—
Savia was not, because one Sapia
Was called, and given than these a lighter weight to bear.

"And higher happiness than theirs to be.
If to thy mind, this ignorance appears,—
Or as if Folly hated told it thee :—
This one who now descends the arch of her allotted years

"Waits as a citizen, to dwell with those
Encamped upon the Hill, an adverse Host :—
And I pray God, such may his will disclose,
That safe escaped the hunt, have counted not the cost

"In a great joy which nothing severs there."—
So much I saw light up an ardent face,
With cry to God :—Oh, never more let fear
Direct the Merlin's wing to seek a goodlier place.

"Though God's peace had within me there been shed,
In life's extremity, I could not see
How duty must by penitence be led,—
Till Father Picro had in prayers remembered me.

"With charity incredible for such.—
But why of our condition ask'st thou me,
When I believe thy eyes have been so much
Untied, as if a Spirit here had breathed on thee?"

"My eyes," I said, "were widened in a view
But a short space, when something else was made
So manifest, that from it I withdrew:—
Not much to choose, perplexed, in torment had I stayed:—

"Though from a such like load I am relieved."
Then she:—"Who can he be that leading thee has come
So very near,—yet thou hast not believed?"
Then I:—"because this one who led me here was dumb;—

"And I am living still, at my request
Spirit Elect, say if I hence can tread
The world,—with mortals may I still be guest?"
"Oh thus to hear thee speak of a remove," she said,

"Is that God loves thee certainly a sign;—
So would thy prayers then give to me some aid,
Chosen from those to whom thou art inclined;—
And if thy feet should be on Tuscan soil delayed,

"To relatives this one wilt thou restore;—
Where thou shalt find the many people vain
Who trust in Talamone, and hope no more
To find Diana:—more I leave you to explain."

PURGATORIO

Canto XIV

THE ARGUMENT

They now attract the notice of two Florentine aristocrats who discuss together Dante's unwonted presence in the flesh, asking an explanation. One of these, Guida del Duca, introduces his companion Renier of the House of Calboli, Dante's unknown relative, who after deploring the forlorn condition of Florence, rent by party, schism, and anarchy, straightby predicts to Dante the part he will hereafter take in the approaching Renaissance. After this, there falls as to impede their way, a thunder-bolt.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XIV

"WHO is this man our Mountain that can seek
E'er given him wings for flight that death had grown,
Opening his eyes to shut again as weak?"
I know not,—but I know he comes not here alone."

"Ask thou of him, the nearest to him stand,
If by his courtesy his name be learned."
Thus would two Spirits in their accents bland,
Speak of me to each other as their backs were turned.

Thereafter eyeing me suspiciously;—
Spake one, the first, "Oh soul, we now can see,
Bound in the flesh but lifted to the sky,—
For charity's dear sake tell who and whence you be?

"Nor let us marvel longer so much grace
Is given to mortals all unknown before,"
Then I, "in Tuscany, our country's midst we trace
A rivulet, from Falterono gaining store,

"A hundred miles can traverse in its course;—
In sovereignty to own my life's first stage;—
My name if told would add but little force,
Seeing I have not set my mark as yet upon the age."

"If rightly I interpret of thy thought,"
The questioner said, "thou speak'st of Arno's flood,"
The other one aside, "Is he so fraught
With villany, he hides a name forebodes no good?"

Thereat the other, as in doubt the same,
"I know not, but I would as soon forget,
The valley where it hides as keep in name
A river first from Alpine source,—had evil met.

"Maimed of Polorus, where its trunk divides
To run in separate course, and visit hence
The places where in little good it glides
To those, its scarcity have found their recompense:—

"From whence the Heaven restores it to the sea;—
If streams malarious wander from it hence
When lost to virtue little good can be
To those who of its quality so easily dispense.

"Snakelike to glide, where in their nature changed
Within a fated valley those reside,
As Circe had their pasturage arranged,—
Like to the brutal swine their greediness supplied.

"To show unfit for life, inhuman food,—
And whence their poverty directly came;—
Like snarling curs to worry in excuse
Of a disgrace which makes them look much like the same.

And surly most because bereft of power,
Muzzled in sore disgrace they take their way;—
Changed into Wolves, then ignorantly devour,
As Dog within a Wolf, to seize and hold their prey.

"In malediction made alike to fall;—
For their cupidity hereafter cry
They saw the Wolves so filled with wrath to all,
Their crafts, without a fear, they could re-occupy.

"This let alone, speaking of others hate.
Much good would come to him who would untie
A knot, and in true spirit ease the weight,—
As in thy Nephew here, a man who could defy

"And drive out Wolves that still infest the shore
Till a great flood should take them all away.
If in their flesh they will arise once more
As murderers, secretly dispose of that they slay.

"Bloodthirsty from this mournful shore to rise;—
And whence a thousand years may not restore
A former state of elevated size."
As this announcement of a future gift's great store

Disturbed the face of one, a listening shade,
Where much of peril seemed to him allied,—
Another soul I knew as sore dismayed,
Yet lingered, listening if such words to him applied.

To each and other turned and begged a name,
No longer in a mystery they disguise.
Spake then the one my audience first to claim,
Continuing his discourse straightly to me thuswise:—

"The wish was thine I might not dedicate
To thee my words which none the less are thine,
But if God gives thee grace with light inflate,
No longer gift like this from him thou wouldst decline.

"Guida del Duca this makes known to thee;—
Envy so turned his blood that had he seen
A man to be made happier than he,
A livid pallor in his face expressed his spleen;

"So much the grain is to the chaff relate;—
Oh ye that live what power has filled your heart,
That ties familiar are dissociate?
This one with me is Renier, prized as part

"And honour of the House of Calboli;—
Though little now of value to retain.
Well if not through his blood all naked lie
Beyond the Po, beyond the Mount, the shore's domain,

"The riches of the Truth and all its joy.
Where now so much of poisoning root can grow
That further culture might the good destroy.
Where now is found the good Manardi—where is Lizzio?—

"Guido di Carpigna,—Traversaro?
Ye sons of Romans turned to bastardy
Where in Bologna, Fabro can you show,
Bernadin in Faenza, seedling yet staff to be

"From out the devastated ground to rise.
No marvel, Tuscan, thou canst see me weep
Guido da Prata, and that one likewise
As Ugolin d'Azzo, nearest to life you keep.

"Fredrigo Tignoso, all of his crew,
And House of Traversara, Anstagi's:—
Both disinherited and lost to view,
With all those Ladies that the Knights so eager were to please,

"And witched them into love and courtesy,
Whereby the heart of us was led astray.
Oh Brettenoro standing up so high
Why is thy company removed, and cast so far away?

"Made like the others, nor regained a House.
Better from sons might Bagnacaval cease,
With Castrocara ill, and Conio worse,—
For less the Counts are raised, the less of woes increase.

"Better the Pagans that their demon child
Sent far away, not lost but inasmuch
A testimony left and much enstyled.
Oh Ugolin di Fontalin saved from all others such—

"If possible remaining more obscure.
Now Tuscan go thy way, for this my speech
Holds too much grief for utterance to endure
In thoughts, a kingdom like to yours can scarcely reach."

I know not if this soul we felt so near,
The further from us went, if silent yet
It gave us confidence, the way was clear—
Though moving onwards other sound than this we met.

When from a cloud deep thunder shook the air,—
In contrariety of this to say,
"Those wait who watch for thee to slay thee there."
Then when immediately that cloud had passed away

And all our notice from it was withdrawn,—
Another yet there came in louder tone,
As voice of thunder from a cloud was torn;
"I am Aglauro that to earth, fell in a heart of stone."

As if the Poet's footsteps to deter;—
And right in front of us a weighted stone.
But when the air grew quiet from its stir
I heard his voice: "how hard a way for you, thus strown:—

"You who could take a bait so much beloved
From the old adversary,—first had learned,—
Know little of a force can others move,
And as a bit would guide, to after riches turned.

"Yet when the Call from Heaven has made it known,
And shown you its Eternal loneliness
In clearness hidden by the Earth alone,—
Well understood, is battled for, discerned not less."

PURGATORIO

Canto XV

THE ARGUMENT

Sunset now presents a new and extraordinary appearance in refracted sunlight falling on a bare and stony road, which gives great surprise to Dante; and when a visitation of Angels directs to a new and untried stairway in the Rock, this gives occasion for Virgil to discourse.

After this a vision.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XV

As the third hour sinks from the arms of dawn
Which gives fresh token of awakened day,—
As a pleased child wakes up to greet the morn,—
So had an evening's sun declined upon our way.

And shades of evening likelier midnight grew,
Where latest beams were hidden by the Mount ;—
The nearer where the sea's direction drew,
Which fell around us then as from some glorious fount.

In added splendour visiting my brow
As novelty I never felt before ;—
My forehead bent to screne it from the glow
Which bade me raise my hand, and ease to eyes restore

Thus sheltered from a sovereignty's surprise ;—
And as on glass or water seen to fall
The rays that opposite the sun supplies,—
So now this bare and stoney path could mirror light's recall.

Streaming before us in refracted glow
In dazzling force upon the pathway fell ;—
And from its splendour as I shield my brow
Of my sweet Master asked,—no care like this could tell,

The reason why in front of us it moves?
"And marvel not," he said, "a shining Host
Of Heaven's own family inviting loves
To show to man their shining way in brilliance most.

"For thou must know a sight like this can bring
Not an anxiety, but new delight
To those who nearest to its nature cling."
Then from amidst the Host further removed from sight

Came a sweet voice:—"Enter, prepare to mount
A stairway not like others leading wrong."
Towards this ascent, parting from this we mount,
And "Blessed are the merciful," returns to us in song.

And, "Joy be thine in conquest of the way."
Then I alone, and by my Master's side
Asked if he thought in that we heard them say,
The spirit of the Romans was in word implied.

"Of a great blemish, know," he said, "the cost,
The less admired when other things are seen,—
And less of pain would give unknown of most,
Where an agreement with your own desires too much has lain between.

"A combination which makes parts decrease,
Where envy finds the breath the forge to blow,—
Whereas if hope in Love supreme increase
It leads you out of all the ills, the cares of Earth bestow.

"Where hear the many say, 'Most good is ours,
The more we can possess of goods in one
As in extatic charity from us it pours.'"
This as I heard it, less content, I silent let alone:—

Which much of doubt had added to my thought.
After I said, "If those who gather wealth
Distribute, and to after want are brought,
Must we conclude the less they have the greater wealth."

"Such thoughts as these," he said, "will oft recur,
Long as thy darkened mind can Earthward tend,—
But a true light from Heaven will soon deter,
If from the Ineffable and Infinite true wealth descend

"Leaving all this; so much will Love outrun,
And give to darkened forms a radiant share;—
As these partake the beams from out the sun
More than mere charity, Eternal gifts declare.

"Many are led as by some good intent
To give to good they hate or in self-love.
Seen as in mirror this and that is blent:—
And lest my reasoning should as yet unpleasing prove

"Beatrice in her plenitude thou'lt see
When home returned you each the other greet,—
Provided that the scars effaced can be,
And care revoked, unspoiled, in joy you meet."

Then eagerly I said: "This gives content."
In so much promise could directly turn
To that whereto a shining path was lent;—
Then as a vision in a Temple's throng I could discern

A Mother entering, recognising, say
"Why is it thus, my son, for sorrowingly
I and thy Father missed thee on our way,"
The Lady then not longer with the rest I see.

After, saw one with so much grief's distil
As down the cheek will pour in swolen course
When sore affront has checked its other will,
Confronting it as borne from out a different source.—

"Wouldst thou be Lord," this said, "in city where
As in God's name a strife within is seen
That others science will not favour share,—
Which on a sheltering arm confidingly would lean.

"So had the Athenian's daughter in her state
Demanded death for those who sought her charms;
And had reply: 'What left for those who hate
If those who love us are condemned in equal harms?'"

Then after that I saw a wrothful crowd
Stone a young man to death in martyr cry,
And as in death he to the earth had bowed,
Not there had bent his eyes,—in rapture turned on High.

Of his great Lord there prayed the war and strife
To pardon in a persecuting set,—
And bore such aspect,—pittying his life
In my own soul I saw scenes that could these reset.

Whilst out of him so much the truth could shine,
Errors like mine I could no longer view;—
And then my Duke, to men who could incline,
Spake me, as if some waking dream he would review.

"Why art thou thus unequal in thy pace,
Moving along in such a devious stride
That feet with eyes keep not ther proper place:—
What hast thou seen, as thus awaking thoughts to hide?"

"Oh my sweet Master, if thy listening ear
Might bend to that I tell thee as I saw,
The less unusual would my gait appear."
Said he, "If thou had'st washed thy face a hundred times or more,

"Not in less meaning surely this would show
In its expression,—as so much thy wont,
For well I see that unexcused will flow
The heartfelt peace, when so diffused from the Eternal font.

"And ask not me what Light can give to those,
Who guard their eyes too well that Truth be told,—
Till, as inanimate in death they close,—
But rather, what can give them strength firmly their feet to hold

"If well convinced, on laziness insist,
As cowards to become if men deride."
Thus on we travelled till the evening's mist
Fell on our shining path, the most of this to hide.

Where in the dark so much behind we leave ,
And all the Sun's refraction by degrees
Shut out: nor of the past could I perceive
Much, where in air less pure the eye no longer sees.

PURGATORIO

Canto XVI

THE ARGUMENT

A thick, blinding mist now obscures the way: Dante led by Virgil meets the Shade of Marco Lombardo, a noble Venetian of great experience and value in the practice of Courts; and listens to his discourse on the unsatisfactory form of Religion prevailing in the Empire. At the break of dawn this silently disappears.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XVI

IN gloom like Hell's where was bereft the night
Of stars so much in shine the Heaven can hold,
Hung a dense mist here to obscure the light,
And like a darkened veil my face hid in its fold;

Eyes that beneath it bade me not unloose
But shield them from the blinding ache and smart,—
As a blind man who fears his way to lose
I followed close my Guide where accident might part.

As toiling through the dense and poignant air
I listened whilst he spake attentively:
"Keep close to me," he said, "the bit beware."
And soon some voices heard in prayer, entreatingly

They from God's Angels peace and mercy take—
Lifting from sin their misery to allay
Of *Agnus Dei* their exordium make,—
One word is with them all, one mode in which to pray.

"Who are these Spirits, Master, I detest?"
And he to me, "The truth will make it plain,—
Of its intricacies the knot divest."
Then, "Who art thou our smokey clime forbids in vain

"To speak of us, if dead to Calends day,
Thyself as dead?" this our attention drew,
Because in voice of others this would stray.
"Answer," my Master said, "ask why from these he flew."

"Oh Being that created, would return
To thy Creator beautiful as made,
I listen wonderingly, of thee would learn"—
"I follow thee by hearing at the best," he said.

"Where listening, might the better Earth perceive
Than by the smoke it brought into this place."
Then I rejoined: "With a like bandage wreath
As death desolves I too have brought my case,

"And came on the Inferno Embasy:—
If God has by his grace received me here
Within his Court, I wish so much to see,
As in a way peculiar may be useful where

"I came, than Death had earlier entrance brought.
Solve then my doubts that a safe passage made,
I by thy words may frame a good report,
For failure on return should else on me be laid."

Lombard he was: Marco his name below,—
Much of the world he knew, and valour loved
As tempts the one beneath to stretch his bow:—
Lifting it higher in the dark, its power had proved.

In tones subdued, this in continuance said,
"I prythe pray for me when thou art there."
"On my good faith," I said, "this thou hast laid,
Altho' behind it stands a doubt which needs thy care.

"First, to be candid, then, and lest I doubt,
Canst thou within thy council testify
That things I find differ from those without?
The World of Virtue so denuded,—thou as I,

" Know what a weight of evil covers all:
I pray thee tell me of the things I see,
A reson, that as fact I may recall
That in the Heaven alone from Earth we are made free."

With a deep sigh, " Alas," he recommenced,
" From a blind world, Brother, thou art well brought,
Those who live there think Heaven has so dispensed,
All that can fall to it forms but a needful part.

" So out of your mistrust there may be traced
An arbitrary liberty, unjust,—
That for your joy a mourning has replaced;—
Though all your movements known of Heaven, as from the first.

" Not all I tell, yet thus much I can say
That light enough was given me to defend
In a free will my good from evil way,—
And in a first hard fight saw light from Heaven descend

" In greater force than might my nature bear;—
As a free subject yet to wail in cry
Much as you know, whilst Heaven has no such care.
But if the world with you diverse in paths can lie.

" With you the occasion, as with you the fault,—
Thus may I speak to one who truth would spy.
And as in nature lingeringly we halt,
Led as an infant by the hand dependently,

" The simple soul knowing no other guide,
If led by one will gladly with it go;
Knowing no other way or care beside,
So little for its good in its first sense to know:—

" Or ignorant, might lag behind its love.
Whilst has a law made as a bit to guide
Become a reigning power,—so to remove
A tower of light the citadel will after hide.

"The laws are made but who is led by law?
Not one, because the Pastor who preceeds,
The whilst considering has not healed the sore,
So that the flock who craved a guide no longer heeds.

"Seeing their good is turned to glutony,
Which fills the pastures and leaves none a choice—
Altho' the Evil then they more descry,
Where rules unnatural and corrupt have lent their voice.

"And Rome, a world that in its worth should show,
Become two suns, as if to light two ways,
One as the World's, the other God's bestow,—
And one from other to absorb the shining rays.

"So to disguise the sword and Shepherd's crook
That all its force points but the evil way,
Because the one the other has forsook—
If thou believe not, yet will hear what now I say.

"For every herb is known by that it seeds.
Between those paths the Po and Adige know,
Valour and courtesy had left their deeds;
Till Frederic came,—the less distinct two ways to show.

"Whilst had security so passed from there
Scarce one was left who looked not then ashamed
To argue with the just, if such came near,
Altho' three aged men were left the novelty that blamed.

"From better life God possibly delayed
Currado of Palazzo, Gherado,—
And Guido of Castel, the last who made
The Gallic phrase more fit the simple Lombard flow.

"From this discern how much the Church of Rome,
Confusing in itself two ruling powers—
Soiled in the mire to fall by weight o'ercome."
"Oh Marco, Brother mine, I see in this how dowers

"Once given to Levy, could his sons erase;
But who is that Gherado, if thou know,
Who will remit to a downtroden race
Reproach that came by a profane and savage foe?"

"Why ask of me that ignorant in the dark
Can give no answer in thy Tuscan tongue,
Wherein the good Gherado owns no part:—
And by another's surname must be known among.

"Unless his daughter Gaia should insist;—
God will be with you though none others may.
Now I can see the dawn whitening the mist—
The angel his first visit pays, nor more I say."

PURGATORIO

Canto XVII

THE ARGUMENT

As they prepare to ascend the Mount the atmosphere clears, and Dante recalls to mind a darker phase of his religion, in the old story of Lavinia's Queen Mother, metamorphosed into a nightingale at Jove's behest, in punishment for the murder of her own son, by mistake for another's, through envy. The ascent of the Mount presenting unexpected difficulty, gives opportunity for Virgil to discourse and encourage.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XVII

READER, recall how on an Alpine height,
Obscured in mist, thy eyes might not remark,
More than the mole's, earth-filmed, bereft of sight,—
An eminence so crowned, hidden as in the dark.

How through the damp, held as a vaporous cloud,
The full orbed sun in power seemed to increase,
Though faintly at the first, involved in shroud,—
The all pervading dimness pierced,—had found release.

Imagine then, how by this Mount I see
Unfettered sunbeams on its side to stay,
Following my Master's footsteps warily,—
No longer amidst clouds of Death to lose my way.

Imagination, why art thou so bound,
That entrance from without finds no accord?
Though round about a thousand trumpets sound,
That move the senses, but leave out the heart's own chord.

Touched by the light that comes from Heaven's own face,
And by the Heaven's own will to Earth proceeds:—
The impiety of her I then could trace,
Changed to that Bird of Song whose sweetness none exceeds.

With much imagination for my guide,
It brought within a bondage to my thought,
Where from such like there nothing came beside
Than things from her received, so full of fancy fraught.

Where height of Fantasy could only trace
A wrathful crucifixion to reside
Within a view where Death had so much place;—
Alike, as Ahasuerus proud, with Esther bride;

Where Mordecai the just, composed a part.
And this incongruous idea self blown all
Came up a bubble that would blistering start,
Failing for want of water, whence it rose to fall:—

There to my vision came a child's sad thought,
With a strong cry that went; "Wherefore, oh Queen,
Hast thou for wrath's sake made thyself as nought;—
A murderess,—lost in that Lavinia thou hast seen?"

Lost to me now, between the flute-like notes;—
A mother, all thy prayer a ruin's wail;—
As on the air such dying music floats,
To be renewed in force, if as at first it fail:—

Imagine how a light, but dim below,
Renewed in force of greater brilliancy,
Far more than of a common use could show;—
All my desiring hence the newer way to see,

Soon as I heard a voice: "Climb here thou must,"
Which moved from me, as now, my former thought,
And left me willingly inclined to trust
A voice that with it had such full agreement brought.

With light, no more concealed if once received;—
For as the sun within our vision dim
Has authorised itself to be revealed,—
So might my virtue, held henceforth, be safe in Him.

Which is the Spirit that divinely sent,
Points out the way direct, and asks no price ;—
And as the light alike in its descent
To me, as by a man held for a sign, sufficed.

Beneath its influence much of value saw,
Altho' at times malignantly despised ;—
My steps accordingly the path before,
Proceeded to attempt, than so much speed advised.

Failing upon the steps to plant my feet
As said my Duke the same ; whilst he at sight
Willing to mount the stairs, and be as fleet,
Immediately would take the same with me in flight.

Whilst I upon the first step waiting stand,
And feel so near the flutter of a wing
Against my face, as said : " Blest is that Band
Who to a peaceful walk no blight of wrath can bring."

Whilst higher on than yet the pathway lies,—
Where lingering sunbeams that were there retained,
Held back the stars that seemed but late to rise—
" Oh Virtue mine, why art thou in thy force so much delayed ? "

This to myself I said, feeling so much
A possibility to fall or slip ;
Not yet had we perceived a stairway such
As soon would aid us as the sails to port a ship.

Whilst this might show how little I had gained
Of Knowledge in a newer way delayed,—
I turned me to my Master whom I blamed :
' Dear Father mine, for what of goodly end this journey made ?

" Devoid of sense, it now appears to me,
If our feet fail us ; and as fails thy word."
Answered he then : " Love of the good we see,
Should in itself suffice to bring us our reward,

"And all our tardiness of step remove.
But that we find a widening of intent,
Take thou good heart from me, so shalt thou prove
Taste of a ripened fruit, which this delay has sent.

"Hath a Creator made His creature so
As His own son, and not to be beloved?
How natural to the soul as thou dost know,
And if so natural, must without a failure prove.

"Though other power come in to this opposed,
Oh how deceitful, of how little good;—
Had this, as at the first, been still enclosed
As secondary, not the less its stature stood.

"And for a sickliness not less beloved:—
But when for malady a cure prepared,
How much of ill dispensed therein they shoved
Against Authority;—self-made Adoption shared.

"Hence may be understood how can agrees
The love of every virtue sown in you,
That in fruition no fulfilment sees;—
Oh why should health in so much good design be lost to view.

"Given appropriate hatred of the ill,—
Why as diverted from the first, to let
Even for one moment, share of other's will
Be set against a thing in true affection met.

"For thus apportioned, good in great esteem,
And evil loved in near relationship,
Has borne three motives that might well beseem
Such height,—where highest excellence can make the greater slip.

"Where such three powers as Favour, Honour, Fame,
In fear lest these might from a summit fall,
The opposites of Love thereby became;—
In grave affront and injury following a saleman's call.

" Where so much that is bad, they stamp as good.
This triform love, corrupt upon the Earth,
Distressful came to those who understood
In other sense, than that corruption stands for worth.

" Though this confusion one good thing it wrought,—
That peace of soul, so much to be desired,
When judgment rules between contentious thought ;—
And if so be a later love is then inspired.

" Oh, what an acquisition, such a home,
After just punishment has felt its sting ;—
Man's happiness in other's good become,
Not less felicitous that from such root fruit's essence spring.

" The love so self abandoned that had been,
Weeping around us, three times had embraced ;—
But why three times embracing thus was seen,
Is silent, for a cause within thyself encased."

PURGATORIO

Canto XVIII

THE ARGUMENT

Virgil resuming his discourse endeavours to allay some of Dante's doubts. Then roused from his lethargy they are assailed by a noisy troop of Spirits, who greet them with some goodwill though peculiar. At Virgil's behest, they leave these in haste to make room for higher thoughts.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XVIII

As ended thus the Sage his high discourse,—
He saw I bent my head attentively
As if acknowledging much of its force;—
As if I drank in with new thirst that offered willingly.

Not silent then, in furtherance I said
"Perhaps I ask too much thy wealth to give,"
But my kind Father took himself ill paid
That I should have a wish and not before receive.—

Then eagerly my timid wants inquired:
"Master," I said, "it seems thou hast derived
More light than I have hitherto acquired,—
Only as made my darkness more to be described.

"Wherefore I pray thee, kindly, Father mine,
Instruct me how a love that is endued
And followed in good faith should have decline?"
"Direct," he said, "thy intellect towards mine, well used

"Will show thee how by error blindly led;
The soul a pleasured love if made to know,
Towards everything will turn that this has fed,—
Well pleased with all it brings, or suitable or no.

"And apprehended thus the thing seems true,
Where good intention you at first descry.
For swift the soul was made that towards it flew,
And if perverted, still of goodness will imply.

"Approved and loved how natural is it then
From newer law new pleasure be derived,
As fire will often change a form and when
Some new material, true to nature, is from this supplied.

"Thus, too, the soul now centered in desire,
When spiritually moved would not restore
Or dress the thing beloved in less attire.
As thou thyself would know, bearing the truth before

"The men who hold their love a worthy thing,
And their chief motive, find it not less true
Or less a sign of good, if ash it bring."
"These words of thine I follow well," I said, love can endue.

"Yet have they borne on me somewhat of doubt,—
For if our love is given us and so bound
Our souls must take it willing or without,—
Surely the fault not ours, if fault in it is found."

Then he to me: "So much by reasoning led
I have made manifest; Beatrice hence
In her pure aspect truth had better said:—
Seen in a more substantial form the virtues there condense.

"Nor thus esteemed if their effects not rife;—
Well demonstrated in new effort wrought,
As the green leaf springs up into its life
And man knows not in least how thus its movement brought.

"Whilst the first apprehension this supplies
Is like a study window not yet wide,
Through which are glympses we may not despise,
Although a wider prospect there would seem to hide.

"If to one virtue all the others cling,
Surely it is the one innate to guide,
And to a higher standpoint yet would bring
As primal motive, to all others most allied.

"A reason for its merit to be seen,
Where good and real lovers can agree,
Liker if this the foremost held between,
And harmony prevails, founded in liberty.

"The moral of all this left to the world,—
Whence comes the grief as of necessity,
If love o'erflowing is not in it furled,
And still detained in you a power revealed to see.

"Such noble virtue had Beatrice wrought,
By her good will, but of all this my speech
Is guarded, where so much is held in thought."
And now the moon at night its higher course would reach.

Where tardily the stars revived in light,—
As cauldron fires in glow to hence become ;—
Whilst contrary in Heaven two paths in sight,
The sun went down inflamed as seen in fall at Rome

Betwix Sardinia and Corsica ;—
Whilst had that gentle soul who bore a name,
More known in Pietole than Mantua,
My burden's weight relieved, though bearing it the same.

Because his reasoning gone so far beyond,
The manner of my questioning made me seem
Whilst of a burden not so much in bond,—
Like one who waking finds how vain was all his dream.

When fantasy arroused, on higher ground
A noisy group came towards us like the swell
Of waves,—Ismero and Asopa's sound,
When nightly Theban's Bacchus prayer is heard in yell.

Though as they nearer came I more could heed
That this their color came of their good will,—
From a sincerest love could thus proceed ;—
Whilst shoulder high they hid from us the zigzag of the hill

Two of the foremost cried out piteously:
"Mary in haste had to the hill's side sped,
And Cæsar left Marseilles in grief to lie,
That he might goad Ilerda, as to Spain he fled.

"Oh, hurry on," they cried, "lest time be lost,
And lighter love outrun in its delay
A study newer grace revives the most."—
My Duke in answering each their voice, could say

"You that a fervent zeal had once possessed,
And made neglect or ignorance belie,
In a lukewarmness put aside your best—
This man who lives (and sure to you I could not lie)

"Would higher paths attain ;—a sun declined,
Urges him on ; tell us if yet there be
Some opening that though near we fail to find."
Said one: "In front of us standing a hole you'll see.

"Not that we wish to take with you the road,
And restless here our steps we still detain ;—
Pardon, if villainous or just our mode.
I was once Abbot of San Zeno, in the reign

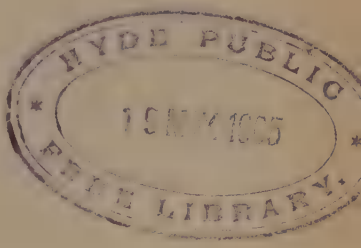
"Of good Barborassa ; who credit gave
Our Abbey whilst the Milanese might weep,
In such a way set one foot in the grave
Which possibly has made our monastery to keep.

"The whilst his son, of body ill compact,
And worse in mind, and of an evil birth
Taking his place, the truer pastor lacked."
And more I know not, if he said, I lacked its worth.

For he who never failed in need supplies
Bade me to fly,—and leave all of a kind
That in ascidity to death allies.
Fronting the troop he cried to those we leave behind:

"First fled the men to death in opened sea,
And after, Jordan made of these his Heirs.
Whilst those too anxious what their fate might be,
And left the Son of Anchises, lost all their gain in fears."

Those shadowy forms bereaved thus of their power,
Newer and varied thoughts around me prest
In livelier vision, that could overpower
All I had dreamed before of love, in its unrest.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PURGATORIO

Canto XIX

THE ARGUMENT

Dante roused from a gruesome dream in the early morning is persuaded by Virgil to search for an entrance whence they can ascend the Mount. They meet with some miserable Spirits, who decline to direct them further, and they resuming their more congenial conversation, Virgil hints at a time when Dante, freed from deterrent powers, will be united to Beatrice.

PURGATORIO

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XIX

In such an hour as when diurnal heat
Has veiled the pale light of the watery moon,—
When Geomanciers kneel at Fortune's feet,
Waiting the Star of Fate, least it should fade too soon :—

In such an hour of dreams, there came in sight
Vain of attire, and maimed in hands and feet,—
With eyes askance, one crippled in her height
Hiding somewhat a face with sickliness replete.

Amazed I saw the limbs a sun could warm,—
Benumbed delayed in night of cold so long,—
Start into life, and all erect of form
She stood, and spake in haste, as love delayed in song.

Then with her tongue so loosed, began to sing
As from herself attention to disown,
And less of pain to me she thought to bring—
Whilst all her sickliness had in her ashen hue been shown.

"I am that Syren, yes that Syren sweet
In the mid-seas could mariners delude,—
Whose pleasure not with pain was yet replete ;—
Ulyssis in a rightful path with songs pursued

"To lead him, as I knew well of the way
To wreck his enterprise, and fail his care."
Then as her lips she sealed in love's delay,
A Lady holy in her haste came nearer to us there.

So near, this had confused her:—as I might
I cried to Virgil, "Virgil, who is this?"
Thus spake in haste, yet I had seen the light
In her pure eyes, where honesty directly told me;—this

The other took, and not by shame detered
Stript to the waist and showed a hidden sore
Which there oppressed me, noisomeness so stirred,
And turning from it all, I the good Virgil saw.

"Three times at least I called thee, come away
To find a door through which we higher mount."
Thus roused I saw the Heavenly light of day
Had in its higher Circle there embaced the Holy Mount.

My forehead bent, I followed as inclined,
Thinking he knew the keystone of an arch
Which though it bent would ruin not unbind:—
Content to follow him in paths of high research.

If sunward led, old things be changed to new;—
A voice then heard, "Come to this door, the ascent."
In tone so sweet and gentle well I knew
It was not of the world where things of late were blent.

The swan-like wing prepared as if to fly
From all,—if more inclined to hear a voice
Could come between two others speaking nigh:—
As an impediment might lure away their choice.

Withall the pinion pointed, yet could say,
And fanned the words to us upon the air:—
"Blessed are those that mourn, for comfort, they
Shall have who comfort bring to other souls in care."

"Why do thy eyes look downward from on High?"
Then spake my Guide, left as we were alone,—
The Angel soared above us through the sky;—
Then I, "So much suspicion has of late been thrown

"Athwart my vision, it obscures the sign."
"Hast thou not seen of old," he said, "a sorceress can
Delude and keep in clutch a soul's decline,—
Only as record to retain, the pain it gives to Man.

"Seen how she surely keeps within her key
A fortress that has built on earth its hold;—
Lift up thy eyes to Heaven a Kingdom see
The Circle of the Magi kept as in a fold."

Then as to Earth a Falcon's feet are turned,
Whilst listening to a cry, its food supplies
First takes before its Heavenward flight is earned,—
So I, like this before an opened door I learned to prize.

In the fifth Circle, following as I might,
Spirits we see apart, in deep drawn sighs
Bent to the Earth, saying in sorest plight
"Our soul has cleaved unto the dust;"—which every sigh
implied.

"Oh ye, the Elect of God, who suffer so,
And find the way of hope, and right too hard,—
Instruct us if you can the Heights to show,
In knowledge you have gained beyond the world's regard:—

"If thus you can ascend, nor earth recall,—
In higher altitudes seem less forlorn,"
Thus had the Poet prayed them! silent all,
Because, advised, I had not named them highly born.

As turned from these my eyes I met his own,—
Who in a pleased surprise had seen the sign
That I had made my choice when better known,
And to his after teaching would the more incline

As on an Earthly nature this might fall.
"Spirit," I said, "from whom sighs only come,
As sighns of penitence that would recall
The soul to God, and so restore to its lost home.

"Hold me a little in thy better care;—
Maybe I turned away too much my back
To that above me, and of this aware,
More readily now take instruction that I lack."

He then to me, "If we have turned aright,—
Nearer than these to Heaven, first thou must know
Peter's successor I become of right,—
Where seen between Chiaverie and Siestri's flow.

"A lovely rivulet there runs, my name
The title of my lineage best had shown,—
A little later born had seen the shame
The weight of a great mantle in the dust had strown.

"There burdened like a feathered cushion lie,—
Alas, that my convertion came so late!
Or as a Roman pastor even I
Discerned how in the path of life great liars wait.

"Seeing that these no quiet send the heart,
And lack a power beyond the present life,—
Where I had held so much as dear, apart
From God the whilst I strayed where other love was rife,

"Which as we see brings here its penalty,
Where avarice the soul has left forlorn;—
In converse this no longer held to be;
And not more bitterness, in life, is purged in scorn."

"If upwards we can mount where now our eyes
Once so relieved are lifted to the skies,
Then far above the Earth-born care we rise,
Where higher avarice draws from hence its food supplies.

"And thought and sore distress will not detain
Our work of righteousness, whilst we must use
Both hands and feet if so the top we gain,
Its majesty, if after this our eyes may not refuse."

Then at his feet I fain would speak, but he
Whose griefs I listened to alone I knew
Had comprehended all my reverie,—
Asked why to Earth my limbs their highth I drew.

Then I to him, "Because thy worthiness
Has filled my conscience with direct remorse,"
"Straighten thy limbs, my Brother—for not less
Than thou," he said, "I own a power of high research.

"But true if still to holy Gospel sound
The *neque nubens*[1] thou hast understood,—
Fly from all this, though not yet leave the ground,—
Thy stanza as with mine still keep in all its good.

"When parted from my griefs thus to agree;—
Maturity of thy discourse then take,
One of my kindred, Aligia,[2] see,
For of her good in ill example of my house I record make."

[1] "Nor shall be given in marriage."—Matt. xxii. 30.

[2] Alagia is said to have been the wife of Marchese Marcello Malaspina, one of Dante's protectors during exile.

PURGATORIO

Canto XX

THE ARGUMENT

They here encounter the Shade of Hugh Capet, the founder of a long line of French Kings, who deplores the evil the Capet dynasty brought into Italy.

Immediately after this the Mountain is violently shaken, and the Renaissance here anticipated.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XX

AGAINST a better will the worse will fight,
Hence had my pleasure held me in its force
As might some torrent stopt regain its height:—
If I moved slowly—not less softly in his course

My Duke would lead me to the rock-bound rest,
The home haunt of the Merlin's safety where
Unharmed of evil eyes be found a nest
Where worldlings seeking their content might not repair.

Cursed be thou the wolf of old that more
Than any other beast proclaimed the thief,—
And in thy hunger took of others store,—
Oh Heavens! that men who hold as their belief

In transitory state the things below,
Seeing a truth should hold it as deceived!—
Thus had we journeyed on, till tired and slow
A Shade the more of my attention drew, as I believed

He piously could here in weeping moan.—
When after that a *Dolce Maria*
Had followed, came from this a piercing groan,—
As if some birth pang in its haste asserted here.

Spake then like this: "The poverty we meet
Within this Hospice has of much to show
Would make thy holiness the more complete."
And then immediately: "Oh good Fabbrizio,

"Thy poverty with so much virtue joined
Makes all great riches seem akin to vice."
Such words as seeming for my pleasure coined
I stayed the more contentedly to take advice.

Then he would speak of all the bounty free
A Nicholas once gave to Maidenhood,—
This for their honour as a guard to be.
"Oh Spirit," there I said, "thy words well understood

"I ask thy name,—wherfore so much alone?
A worthy record leaves thee much of praise.
Not without thanks I would thy words make known
If as I wish, in life's short span I end my weary days."

"I tell thee not," he said, "for my content,
Rather for thine, and solely for a cause
That grace may light on thee ere life be spent.
I was of evil stock, a plant so full of flaws

"The Christian land could after less declare
That any fruit was grown this to relieve.
But had I now of Ghent and Bruges a share
Possessed, of Lille and Douay, I would all retrieve

"Much in the same as these uphold my power:—
Hugh Capet's son they called me, whence there springs
In Philips' and in Louis' all the dower
Since given anew to France these had received as Kings.

"As better to make known himself and his,
Unarmed he comes, as trifling with a lance
He jousted Guido, and for all of this
Made Florence feel his power, all of her woe enhance;—

"Nor take the land but for dishonour's sway;
In strength of lies to seem her guardian still:—
Where much the weight, in gift he took away;—
And when another came thus to uphold his will,

"Soon as he lands, his daughter for a price
He sells as any Corsair might his slave,—
Oh avarice what madding strange devise
Can hold my blood uncured of the bad flesh it gave.

"And lest the future leave this pain unhealed
From Alaga there came the Lily flower
That in vicariousness his Christ consealed:—
And different, in a cell, derided saw his power.

"Son of a Paris butcher I was born,
When ancient Kings, save one, reduced, wore brown;
With government entrusted, less forlorn
This brought me newer friends, with it a promised crown

"To deck my son withall, this to be worn
As gift they offered for the *Sacred Bone*,—
A mighty dower of which Province, once torn
Retained such bloody stain my shame could not disown.

"Of little value,—not less evil show
When this commenced on strength of lies to feed.
As if to make amends would seize Poitou,—
As Normandy and Gascony the lands concede.

"To Italy came Charles, for this amends
Young Conradino as a victim slew,—
And Thomas hid away, to Heaven he sends.—
And then another Charles from France is dragged to view.

"See where renewed the vinegar and gall,
Between the living thieves a murderer die.
See a new Pilate discontent with all
Into a Temple bring a veiled cupidity.

"When, oh my Lord, shall I rejoicing see
In vengeance that has yet to be withdrawn
Made sweet thy wrath,—held in thy secrecy?
And if I speak of that, as a sole spouse new born,

"And of the Holy Spirit, thy request
Would turn from me and take a different choice.
How much our prayers dispose of when, divest
Of harshness, to be heard as in a different voice;—

"When contrary, a note can change the sound.
We still recall how had Phygmalian fared
When Traitor, Thief, and Paracide he found
That gluttony of gold had all his will impaired.

"The misery too, that Midas after earned
In following his inordinate desire,—
When in a similar reward returned.
The folly too of Achan—not less understood

"As fresh from spoil he met with Joshua's wrath,—
A sharp reproof for avarice to gain;—
Saphira with her Husband lessening worth;—
What praise had these of Elordorado to proclaim.

"When a whole mountain rings the infamy
If Polenestor slay Poledoro;
So that at last to Crasso they would cry
'Tell us what taste there is in gold, for thou must know.'

"All these have set their voices low or high,
According as affection less or more
Has stript of gold the spur, and brings reply:—
If for my good I stay with these, with them deplore,—

"Above them I not yet had raised my voice."
As we had parted from him and began
Again to search a road beyond our choice,
Immediately in throbs the Mountain shook—as if in fall to man.

Which brought the icy chill into my heart
As only death in parting this had torn :—
Not thus had Delos shook,—free to impart
A nest to Latima, if Heaven's twin eyes be born.

Whilst had my cries to all my steps replied,
The closer to my side my Master drew,—
"Fear not," he said, "that I should fail thy Guide.'
After, a *Gloria in Excelsis*, voiced of God I knew

As surer guide than this, a powerful cry
I hence recall.—Immemorable in doubt ;—
As might some Pastor, when to first descry
Some meaning in a Canto ;—tremours past, recount.

When this had ceased, upon our holy road
I could reflect how such a Shade as this
Could back return, as to his usual mode :—
Nor was I ignorant before,—but strife like his

Gave me desire of something else to know :—
Though if my memory serve me this I sought
Not as in haste, but as in powers bestow
Of others ;—timid of all that, held in my thought.

PURGATORIO

Canto XXI

THE ARGUMENT

Having made the ascent of the Mountain's three steps, they are overtaken and greeted by the Shade of Statius, the Roman Poet,—and personally unknown. In the peculiar recognition of poets these unite, and remain in company through Purgatory.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XXI

A NATIVE thirst that will not be allayed
Save in such draughts as at the wells of grace
A woman of Samaria once detained :—
Held back fatigued my steps behind my guide's swift pace.

As made me there condone for vengeance due ;—
When as in older times Luke could relate
How Christ appeared whilst on their way to two
New risen from the sepulchre's wide open gate :

There came a Shade towards us from behind,—
Well hidden from a crowd beneath our feet,—
Unseen by them would our attention bind.
With his,—" God's Peace my brethren,—you upon your way
I greet."

This towards us turned :—and Virgil his salute
Gave of his courtesy to him the same ;—
As thus he spake :—" Within this court's high suit
A blessed peace is thine,—my exile must not claim."

" How then," said he, " have you this power to mount,
If shades you be that God above disdains " ?
Answered my Teacher :—" If the marks thou count
This from the angel's hand received, and still retains.

"Know that for him the thread was not yet drawn
The Fates within their spindle wheel entwine :—
At Clotho's hands by all below is worn :—
Because his soul, in sisterhood with mine and thine

"Drawn from above, alone could not remain ;—
Though such adoption others may not see ;
For I was drawn from Hell's mouth to detain
And show to him and others what that power could be

"Which leads my school :—But tell me, dost thou know
Why at its base the mountain so can shake ?
A murmuring crowd in fear detains below ;—
So much a point in my desire my thirst would slake."

Then spake the shade :—"The cause may not be known
Save an unusual ordinance is felt
In a religion which this mount can own
From Heaven :—alone believed because it is so sent.

"For here no mists from hidden damps arise ;—
No frost, or rain, or drifting snow can fall ;—
No dews drop tears, or Iris cloud the skies
Daughter of thunder and its flash,—frequent and changeful all

"By this dry air delayed, not farther stray
Than the three steps as spoken of before,
Where Peter's vicarage in complainings stay,
With tremblings often—more or less,—perhaps the more.

"Not here can earth's pent winds ascending drive,
And agitate beneath the lower air ;
But if from earth a newer soul arrive,
The tremour of the steps is felt, for all is noted there,

"A measurement of worldiness there takes,
That it proceed, and in accordance be ;—
The soul surprised then a new birthday makes,—
Desirous of the good, but not at first set free.

"Judgment divine as given against a will
And wish to sin, unfetered by its pain:—
And I who was adjudged to this, fulfil
Five hundred years and more:—that state not now retain.

"My will henceforth is freed to mount the air;
For whilst I felt the tremour at its feet
Come from the mount, my spirit praise could bear
To that great Lord, who in a higher flight brought this retreat."

As thus he spake, his gladness I partook;—
Drank in a draught my thirsty soul would stay;
Nor might I tell how much of good I took.
Then my wise Duke:—"this was the entangled way

"By which we came,—here mounted it as high,—
Our feet firm set that trembling steps might bear;—
Such doubt resolved, wilt thou once more reply,
Say why those thoughts of thine so like my own appear?"

Then said the Shade;—"At that time when a King
Of a great Kingdom could avenge the blood
That Judas sold,—and good King Titus bring
A name much honoured then, and since revered has stood:—

"I whilst enjoying much of fame lived there,
Not yet with faith illumed, so sweet my song
That from Tolosa, Rome brought me to wear
A myrtle wreath they bound;—to merit might belong.

"Stazio then called me,—whilst the praise I rung
Of Thebes:—and great Achilles less I made,—
But sank beneath that burden whilst I sung,
For all my ardour seemed like sparks love's flame allayed,

"And had a thousand times the less illumed.
Of Æneas too I told,—first nurture drew—
As smoke and fume a Poet's food consumed;—
Nor was it less dramatic in its ending's view.

"But had I lived within another day,—
Conversed with Virgil, though unworthily,—

It would have brought me out of much delay."
Then Virgil listening to his words half turned to me

With face that silently said;—"Keep thou still."
But not his own the mandate would obey,—
His pleasure manifest against his will:—
The smile that follows feeling, truth will not gainsay.

I smiled on him, as friend will friend regard;
Meanwhile the Shade looked on us silently,—
As recognition we could not retard,
Had fixed his gaze where all had looked so brotherly;

And thus he spake:—"The smile seen in your face
Is it mere demonstration? or I part
Of both to you,—and such in me you trace;
One bids be silent,—other one speaks to my heart,

"In wish the most to be so understood."
Then said my Duke:—"Have thou no more of fear,
But speak to me, and speak the things I could;—
And this I ask of thee with all my heart's felt cheer."

Then I:—"Well mightest thou marvel such an one as I,
Thou ancient Spirit, at thy words could smile;—
But more of admiration should descry,
For as his eyes to mine, this guides me here the while.

"And this is Virgil talking with thee now,
That mighty man who sang of men and God";
So that my smile was only an avow,—
Not having seen, believe this one with me has trod."

At this he fell as he would kiss the feet
Of my wise Doctor, but he said: "Not so
My Brother, for a Shade myself, I greet
A Shade, drawn to each other as thou seest now."

At this he rose:—"What love store there must be,
That thou and I should the ascent have made;
And here divested of our vanity,
Converse with more solidity, as Shade with Shade."

PURGATORIO

Canto XXII

THE ARGUMENT

In conversation with Statius, Virgil alludes to the defamatory charge of avarice he heard against him by Junius in the Inferno. This he contradicts, though he acknowledges his prodigality of wealth to be not less penal: he also confesses his lukewarmness in the Christians' Religion after being baptized. Continuing in company, in their way they see a large wide-spreading tree laden with ripe tempting fruit.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XXII

NOW parted from the Angel, that as guide
To the sixth Circle guarded us the way,—
And from my brow erased one scar beside,
In its disfigurement allowed no longer stay,

Whilst virtue held back those in most desire :—
In listening to their tone's beatitude
With thirst unquenched I felt as lifted higher,
Conversing more with souls as could befit my mood,

In greater ease preparing me for flight.
Virgil had there commenced : "One step begun
Towards virtue brings with it the more delight,
Warming another's bosom from the flame of one.

"As towards our Company I saw descend
The Shade of Juneval, that there I met,
Who lessened my affection for my friend,
Towards whom I had desired to climb for more content.—

"Maybe that I had missed thy presence there :—
But tell me, as a friend so pardon me,
Whilst in security we better share
And each the other speaks in more affinity :—

"Say how couldst thou, owner of much good sense,
Find room for avarice that could beguile
And fill a heart like thine with its pretence?"
These words addressed to Statius first had raised his smile.

And then he said—"Each word I hear of thine,
As dearer sign of love I here can note;
So true it is we willingly resign
Here all the doubt that had been seen in things remote.

"And thy demand would make it to appear
That I was avaricious in my life:—
The cause might seem I am encircled here;—
But know, with love of riches I was less in strife.

"A thousand moons might chasten that excess.
Yet scarcely have I risen in my cure,
Well understood of me, and judged not less
Below, in haste where thou had made of this too sure.

"Oh! why not reign, as sacred, thirst of gold
Immortal, if of mortal's chief desire!
Full well they know how poor the jest if told.
There where my wing was clipt and I could less aspire

"In open-handed wealth, give these its use,
A sense of sin had come to me the nigher;—
How much reviving from an ashed disuse
Will ignorance in penitence life's waste require.

"Know that for every sin a stroke received,
Makes but the verdure to more fitly grow.
Therefore I am with those who wealth deceived,
And not the less for avarice have their tears in flow."

Resumed, the pastoral Poet and the Sage:
"Thou that could sing the cruelties of war
Waged as twin sorrows in Jocasta's page;—
And Clio, in a touch from thee to song restore:—

"In faithfulness of Faith would seem to fail,
Or if believed in not to others preached;
Was it the sun had not yet pierced a veil
That made thee follower of a sign the Fisherman had reached?"

This his response: "By thee invited first
Parnassus led, the grot I entered in,
Where afterwards God's light arround me burst,
Making me feel like one a light who held within

"Kept straight behind,—to mark a devious way,
And give to night unsatisfying gleam:—
When as a gift to me, I heard one say,
'If as at first the age of Gold restored to men might seem

"'Fulfilled in righteousness as at its birth,
The heritage of man from Heaven sent down:—
His progeny must be renewed on Earth.'
Christian and Poet thou, a light to me had shown,

"Guiding my path:—thus taken by the hand
Unworthily, a new attention drew,—
The better, when so led could understand
Some visitors of ours;—admire their teaching new.

"For in the world already sown the seed
Would hence bring forth the Eternal Kingdom's reign,
To some new customs I could well concede,
Seeing so much of holiness had followed in their train.

"I was baptized, but secretly, through fear;—
Drank the new streams, after the Church forsook,—
Renewed, the Pagan world could listening hear
My Theban lay, as still I quaffed from the Castalian brook.

"For such lukewarmness I am here detained
In the fourth Circle, my four hundred years.
Thou that had helped me to this height attained,—
From my unworthiness, can see more worth appears.

"If thou, so lately come from thy distress,
Tell me where Terence, our old friend resides,
Cæcilius, Plautus, Vano not the less,—
If they are with the damned, say where their Alley hides."

"These," said the Bard, "as others thine and mine
Are with me, as both Perseus and that Greek
One Muse had nourished more than others Nine,—
Here in first closure ground their prison seek.

"Where oft we hold sweet converse, in one tone
Talk of the sustenance our Mountain gave.
Euripides is with us, Agatone,
Simonides, Anacreon, those Greeks that have

"The ornament of laurel on their brow;—
With others gathered like thyself there see
Antigone, Delphyne, Agra, know,—
The sad Ismane weeping not less tearfully

"Than she that showed the font of Lagia:
And see the immortal daughter Tiersia,
With Teti and her sister Deidamia."—
Thus had he spake, when both the Poets fell to silence nigher.

Thus less withdrawn I duly looked around—
Where no partition walls a hinderance meant,
Where the fourth handmaid of the day had found
The fifth—with greater ardour that her service lent.

There said my Guide,—"I think with this success
The shoulder of the Mountain gained, content
We keep the circuit of it, not with less
Of zeal than is our wont, and wait instructions sent.

"The less in doubt now that this worthy soul
Will take with us the way of the ascent."
Those two in front, I in a less controul
Behind alone,—and wondering what their lengthy sermon meant.

Whose poetry I least could understand :—
Though as new-coined and dear I held the same.
When midway in the path a tree to hand
All laden with the scent from the rich fruitage came.

Whilst to conceal its height around it rose
Branch after branch, and less its top had showed—
As if, I thought, our way it might disclose.
Whilst from a rock above a silver stream had flowed

The foliage of the Tree all to bedew.—
And nearer as the Poets came they hear
A voice as whispered from the branches through
"Guard well this fruit," then closer to their ear ;—

"More care had Mary in her mind to serve
A wedding feast, that else despised might be,
Than for herself :—and this likewise observe,—
The women of old Rome could in contentment see

"Cups filled with water ; whilst had Daniel too
Despising meat increased in wisdom thence ;
The gold a byegone age had held in view
Was beautiful ;—for hunger men had recompense

"Of acorns ;—and their rustic nectar drew :—
Honey and locusts for his food supplied,
The Baptist in the Desert, on this grew
Glorious and great,—the Gospel's way there opened wide."

PURGATORIO

Canto XXIII

THE ARGUMENT

At Virgil's request they leave the fruit untasted, and passing they see two different sets of Spirits, when delaying from the rest he scarcely recognises his wife's brother, Forese, his great opponent in the Florentine dissensions, who now meets Dante with unwonted fervour.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XXIII

THE whilst my eyes on a refreshment fell
I grieved to think that such a goodly tree
Should to small birds alone its goodness tell;—
The more when in his care that father, pointedly:—

"Leave this my son, for time we mostly need
If any use there be of path we tread."
Therefrom it turned, less greediness to feed
Knowing whose words the most had to my profit led,

"Beheld some spirits weeping, that self heard
Their *Labia mea Domine* could sing—
In sad delivery, their delight had served;—
Oh, my sweet master, who are these so much distate could
bring?"

He in response:—"Perhaps some Spirits vain
Once of great duty, now have solved a knot,—
And if as thoughtful pilgrims they remain
In ways unnoticed, this is their desired lot:—

"It left in haste not afterwards we see."
Some other shades passing we more admire—
Their looks devout though troubled souls they be—
For in their hollow eyes a cloud was seen to lower.

Their faces palid, and their cheeks so thin
As scarcely hid beneath the shapely bone,
Leaving to doubt if such a dried-up skin
Could be revived, and evermore its frightfulness unknown.

And to myself I said in thought beguiled—
"Behold the men who lost Jerusalem
When Mary of her son they had despoiled,—
To wear a heavy ring without its glittering gem.

"Upon whose visage O M O was writ.—
Of good estate, known what the M had meant,
Who would believe an apple's odour fit
To rule desire, should on the watery air be spent."

And whilst I wondered what such famine meant,
A reason not yet manifest to me
For leanness with so much of pallor blent,—
Behold, one most behind came with a bound towards me.

His eyes there fixed, as if in eager haste—
"What grace has brought thee here so near to me?"
His looks not recognised as yet, I traced
As I believed, in voice no stranger this could be.

And when this spark of light rekindled all
Of recollection, then with lips we greet—
For when Forese's features I recall
Not he my scared disfigured face had failed to meet.

"Oh tell me whence thou art," he said, "and these
Thy friends that in companionship seem led,—
Not to remain unless our talk should cease."
Said I, "that face of thine I wept for as the dead

"Grieves me not less in grief distorted so:
I pray by all thou tell me whence it came,
Not as though curious I would wish to know,
But for some other motive this of thee I claim."

This his reply: "In the Eternal will
If health in water fail, not any plant
Will there remain, our nourishment fulfil:—
So are we here together in a mournful chant

"Seeking some source, would give in new supply,
Drink for the souls in thirst of holiness;—
And from some tree a cure, which growing nigh
Diffuses apple odour, and not waterless.

"Where from its verdant top wide branches spread
Not in desire of a great space to fill,—
But for our pain refreshment gives instead:—
Altho' I only speak of pain as an escape from ill.

"For those who to its restful shade are led
In following Christ, with joy have Eli found,
When liberated from their usual bend."
Said I, "Forese, if I gather of thy words right sound

"It seems to me the world had better life
Compared with this to last but fifty years:—
And if the power of sin could seem less rife,
Why has not God of thy good grief relieved thy tears?

"I thought to find thee moaning down below
Where time for time should make for debt amends."
"So much the more," he said, "in haste hast thou
Found me as in a union that all else transcends.

"Where had my Nella drawn me, when the cord
Was loosened,—as she made her prayers and sighs;—
Bringing an unexpected new accord
In a deliverance from a place far from me lies.

"So much of love and care had God bestowed
Upon my Widow,—who so much beloved
In solitude her better works had showed
Than those Barbarians of Sardinia,—whence I had her moved

"In greater modesty of woman's dower.
Oh what my Brother wouldst thou have me say
Where time counts not in future by the hour—
Of changes that have passed to an unchanging day.

"Not satisfied where Florence ladies lend
Their bosoms to the populace in show—
Whilst in a greater care would this defend
Barbarians and Sarasins, who more can know

"Both in their spirit and their discipline,—
But if the shameless ones had certainty
Of what the Heavens could send them for a sign,
These open-mouthed would loud proclaim strange things
they see.

"If by mistake I am not now so led,
A cheek that grows more wan can be at last
An ornament to those on Nana fed.
Alas, my Brother, thought with me flies swiftly past,—

"Yet seems it me, some there will still remain
As if the Sun is hid behind a veil."
"Forese," then I said, "if to retain
Those thoughts within thee that in flight have seemed to
fail,

"These are still graven in my memory now.
But if I live again with those I knew,
Far otherwise than usual I could show
Men to their sisters, as I find them in review.

"And in the sun, would show a night profound
Had gathered them with me in death to stay—
As in accordance with the flesh I found.
And if I draw some comfort from this long delay

"In the ascent and circling of this Mount
Which rising upwards yet detains always :—
Of this my company I take much count—
Leading me to the place where my Beatrice stays,

"Where if convenient they be not delayed :—
Virgil is this who talks with me, the same
Directs the road, and this another Shade
That made your Kingdom's precipice to shake, as near he came."

PURGATORIO

Canto XXIV

THE ARGUMENT

Continuing in discourse Forese introduces by name several distinguished and disfigured personages; and before taking his hasty leave alludes to the then living Corso Donati of the Florentine party, opposed to Dante and a victim to the infuriated populace when he aspired to the Government, and so predicted by Forese.

This leaving them in their walk they see in front a goodly tree laden with ripe fruit for which many people long but do not reach; they are here presently saluted by an angel of surpassing brilliancy, the Tree at the same time wafting back to them odours as of flowers and herbs at springtime.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XXIV

NOT hindered by our talk our quickened pace ;—
One more in company had added force,
As might a ship the favouring gale in chase ;—
And this, the whilst, a Shade admired in his discourse

Where death, if seated in his caverned eyes,
Drew my short life to his, and there I said,
"Perhaps had Ella given us less supplies,
And by some other influence we are onward led.

"But tell me if thou canst where I may find,
Picarda, her to recognise I fail
Amongst the many Notables, inclined
To turn regardfully towards me their faces pale."

"My sister, beautiful as she was good,
Stays not with us but to the tryumph grown
Of high Olympus, now can wear her crown,"
He said ; and then,—"Not one of us is known

"In a resemblance we have left behind ;—
Buonagiunta here his face can hide,
Who was of Lucca ;—thiner faced inclined
The one from Torso, holy Church embraced, and wide.

"From eels Bolsence purged, and his white wine,"
Many he showed me, pointing one by one,
Who with their names contented I resign,
For that I did not see the actual mourning done.

As in his banishment saw toothsome lie
Ubaldin of the Pila;—Boniface
Who crook in hand much people pastured by;—
And Messer Marquis of Forli in less disgrace,

His throat less dry, and still unsatisfied.
In most regard, as more towards me turned,
I fixed on one, seeming the most allied,
The one from Lucca,[1] as I since his name had learned.

This murmuring to himself let fall one word,—
Gentucca,—and I knew he felt the pain
A sense of justice brought to his record.
"Soul," then I said, "whom thoughts can thus detain,

"That whisper seems to carry a demand
In greater confidence thy words to say."
"Woman is born," he said, "not wearing yet her band,
That in my[2] city gives what one man took away.

"And less believing, if in this forewarned,
As for some muttered error this mistook,
Truth in fulfilment will not be so scorned,—
But tell me am I here to see the man his rhymes forsook

"For '*Ladies who bring intellect to Love*,'"
Here I rejoined: "I am not one like those
If spirit stirred the notes not after move,
Or of its thoughtful meaning, after tale, disclose."

"Brother," he said, "believe me at this hour,
Such notes as Notary and Guittone drew
Here to detain me, have a greater power
Of sweetness, though I hate them as I do the New.

[1] The composer of verses and sonnets, once Dante's friend.
[2] Referring to the young Duchess of Lucca, where Dante in exile made a long stay, A.D. 1301.

"Yet I can see that all your wing is stretched
To gain a point, nor misdirected bent,—
Though to our parts has certainly not reached ;—
Songless, because one note than others gives not more content."

Thus as dissatisfied he fled from view ;
Like to the birds that wintering near the Nile,
Whilst to their company remaining true,
Disperse in search of food, nor stay in useless file.

So to his company, that hither led,
Had sought their sustenance some other way,—
From profitless pursuit in swiftness fled
To newer pastures, where perhaps content they stay.

And like a man grown weary of a pace,
Leaving his company would wait awhile,
Then in a swifter flight resume his place,—
Forese would with me no longer time beguile.

And looking backward in his parting said,
"When shall I think to see thee here again?"
"I know not," I replied, "how long delayed
In life, but in a place like this I would not long remain.—

"Nor hasten my return, if I can find
A spot where I may rest my weary wing,—
Whilst of all daily good bereft behind
I leave what to swift ruin does most surely bring."

"Go thou," he said, "where I have seen the blow
They give their beasts a guarded path to tread,
And in like persecution after know
How in a vile disfigurement, have wounded fled.

"Not mine the wish to take another's road,"—
(Lifting his eyes to Heaven),—"this made so clear
Had I the power its clearness to thee showed ;—
Go thou, and dwell awhile with those the life hold dear,

"Unlike a kingdom's where I lose so much
If I exchange a swifter pace for thine."
Then as some Cavalier in group with such
Hastens in gallop to regain and keep his line:—

This in the earnest quest of greater worth
Left me more lonely in my way, with two,—
Who knew so much discordance on the Earth;—
And when in flight, the shade had parted from my view,

The less his presence could my thoughts beguile;—
Turned to the front, I saw another Tree
Full of its life, with apple branches piled,
And these not too far off for helpful hands to free.

Whilst underneath it people raised their hands,
And to the branches sent a mournful moan,
Not in so much of care for strength's demands
As in some hope that prayer might bring the branches down.

Their cry sent back to them in a reply,
Which made them feel the more accutely,—will
In loftiness inclined should meet deny,
And give back nothing of the fruit they longed for still.

Nor longer would they stay if thus deceived.
When nearer to the marvellous Tree than they
Whose many prayers and tears were not relieved
Others there came who for its favours did not dare to stay.

Had they not heard how death came there by Eve,—
Which to the Tree had lent its towering height;
This its great privilege,—could not deceive
Virgil and Statius, and I, who in it saw delight.

Till came to me remembered curse to rest
On new formation in the excess of new:—
As Theseus might take war for double breast.
And thought of Hebrews too, prone in their thirstiness:—

That Gideon's company had lessened seen,
Whilst for the Midianites they left the Hills;—
So nearly side by side their life between,
Those in their thirst refrain,—those filled with torturing ills.

Thus as in thought I trod a lonely way,—
Where late a thousand steps had seemed but one
In former walk, as time had passed away:—
"Why are three lonely travellers pensive wandering on?"

Came in a whisper heard by all the three;
Which made me like a spavined horse to shake
For very fear, when turned such light I see
As ne'er before I saw the gloss on metal take.

Surpassing all in brilliancy of shine,—
Transparent ruby this before me stood—
With, "Should it please you and you thus incline,
I might the more impart, to suit your thoughtful mood.

"And more for peace." This said, lit up a face
So filled with light that doubtfully I turned
Towards my teachers, their instructions trace;—
Like to some man who waits until his way has learned.

Whilst this announcement, to the Tree could bring
Such odorous scents from flowers and herbs, as rise
On airs impregnate with the breath of Spring—
And all the branches stirred, as towards my brow it flies.

Seeming to say, "How blest are those who lit
With so much grace they to their love can bring
Not a desire their hunger to remit,—
But an elixir, where to find the best and dearest thing."

PURGATORIO

Canto XXV

THE ARGUMENT

On a narrow stairway of the rock presenting unusual difficulties, Dante is discouraged. By the way Statius at Virgil's suggestion beguiles the tediousness by discoursing on the future development of the soul, when freed from the trammels of the flesh; and when they have now attained the last step and a narrow causeway, Dante experiences new terror in the first sight of the fire of Purgatory, and of the Souls between its parting flames.

PUERTO RICO

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XXV

THERE came an hour, the Sun, spent his delay—
Entering his circle to the meridian drew,
Leaving to Taurus, and to Scorpio nightly sway;
Whilst we like men in discontent keeping a path so new,—

Prest close together in our toilsome move;—
In an attempt to gain the stair's ascent,
Where one's delay might other's peril prove;—
For well one knew that all another's wing was bent

Like a young stork's, and needed greatest care
Lest an abandoned nest should end in fall.
Whilst I, in zeal for flight the height to dare
Asked when the summit we might reach, or if at all.

Self answer made to this for argument:—
Not so to leave me and be thus detained,
Said my sweet Father,—"Trust the bow that sent
The weighted arrow." And when less constrained

Our peril eased, continued;—"Hungry thou,
Why not take food would nourishment beget?
Remember, canst thou, how had Millagro
Consumed a firebrand that he might be thus reset?

Not to like cruelty be thou consigned;
Think rather as through life you onward glide,
You leave reflection this has left behind—
And as in hardened glass the impress will not hide.

"And if beyond thy cognisance this astray—
Statius is here, as much esteemed I name
To be thy Senator in this delay."
Then he,—"If in the Eternal's will I take the same,

"As a mere carrier my worth believe,—
If in the following of my words, my son,
Thou canst regard me, and wilt thus receive,—
In light from Heaven thy food has nourishment begun.

"The blood perfected that is taken in
By thirsty veins is in the flesh detained—
In need of nourishment required within—
And all the natural vessels are thereby sustained.

"Held of the heart, the blood not so applied,
In virtue more the intellect to fill—
Than a digestion after seeks to hide,—
Is possibly concealed the germ of worth's distil.

"When so secured, not like the other stray,—
But when conjoined, a germ with life has filled.
And who can tell how soon a fragment may
Out of its plant similitude, have higher range fulfilled.

"Beyond a rock-bound fungus of the sea,
Or wayside plant found nearer,—on the shore;—
Above it in the Soul's intensity,
An organism, once may be, the seeds resemblance bore.

"Learn hence, my son, how widely can extend
Some virtue by the heart once vivified—
The natural parts with intellect can blend.
But how the animal in service with this much allied

"Has thus diverged, not given to thee the power
As yet to see, and if allowed of there,
So much increase of knowledge might o'erpower
The native instinct,—if so given full intellect to share.

"But once if truth has opened wide the heart,
Knowledge, before assumed, is felt as fact,—
Articulate within the brain has part
Of a great movement which in lower flight it lacked.

"Borne hence along, from nature now unbound,
And with the Spirit's breath here made to meet—
All of those novelties in virtue found,
Become a sustenance which makes the soul complete.

"And further in similitude admire,
How the sun's warmth the grape to wine it brings,—
Filled with the elixir of life given fire,—
And when Lachesis fails and broken are his strings

"Disassociate from the flesh, the will uncrampt,—
As this has borne the human and divine,
A greater power within the soul is stampt,—
Memory, Intelligence, and Will, in greater force combine.

"No pause allowed, fallen on newer way
This wanders wonderingly through each retreat,—
In ignorance of all its roads to stray,—
Till once the circling of the place is made complete

"Virtue arround begins a shining reign,
Wherein the soul has after this to live,—
So will the Bow—relieved of all the rain,
In diverse colours undisturbed, adornment give.

"Whilst in the air surrounding its delay
The soul that breathes it is a flame relit;
How oft a tiny spark will upward stray
Till in a Spirit form the fire has this refit.

"Such a resemblance as can this fulfill,
Is called its shadow,—an organic state

Preserving semblance, which it follows still :—
As those the altered forms arround us could relate."

All this he told us had relieved the climb
Of many sighs and tears my fear first brought ;—
For this far converse loftier and sublime
Stilling all other thoughts had my affection caught.

And on the latest step as now we turned,
There to resign my anguish,—on our right
In other presence all my fears returned,—
Where fire in parted flames the nearer came in sight.

And which the cornice stood so much above,—
Its fierce reflection hid, now seen in stay
That would prevent our further onward move—
Held there fast by the one,—I in its dread alway.

There spake my Guide : "All through this higher place
A bridle path we each must strictly keep,—
Lest one false step should lead us from the trace."
Then "*Summæ Deus elementia*" heard beneath the steep

Toned in great ardour brought me fear not less
From Spirits wandering through the tongues of flame :—
As I regarding them in their distress,
Feared from this prospect we might share the same.

Then at the end voiced higher than the Hymn,
Came a loud cry : "*Virum non cognosco.*"
Then recommenced as they at first begin,
As in louder cry, a deepened grief would show :—

"*Diana to the woods fled there to chase*
Elise, and her poisoned shaft release."
Then to a former cry they give this place,
As if two virtues when combined bring them more peace.

Such was their mode,—their creed enough to serve,
If flame which scorched them to a cure might draw,
Agreeing with them in their rich deserve,—
So long as pain for cure has power in store.

PURGATORIO

Canto XXVI

THE ARGUMENT

Between the parting of the flames they see two sets of Spirits: these observe Dante's shadow thrown into the Abyss. Behind the rest, and more refined as a poet, is Guido Guincelli, the accomplished but unrighteous Tutor. This after recognising Dante and entering into long and mournful conversation, makes way for Arnault Daniel, a Provincial Poet, only slightly noticed as in his doggerel he acknowledges the authorship of his vain songs.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XXVI

AS on the ledge and closely prest we tread
Said the good Master: "Have my care, young man."
For now the Sun a silvery curtain spread
To veil the shouldered hill, and lessened light began

More to reveal a flame that by its glare
Sent down my shadow like a darkened thought,—
And soon of this the Shades became aware,
For this a reason it would seem an interview they sought.

First they would say: "This man is not disguised,"
Then as the certainty they less discerned
They nearer came of this to be advised—
Still careful not to overpass the pit that round them burned.

Said one: "Oh thou, that keeping most behind
More reverence than tardiness would show,
Listen to one, to thirst and fire consigned,—
And not on one alone thy benefits bestow.

"We are all here that fiercer thirst can know
Than Ethiopes, who cold water, quenched could bear,—
Whilst fire on thee can but as sunshine glow:—
Tell us could Death within his toils have brought thee here?"

Thus spake me one that could attention claim
Had there not been more novelty about,
Where through an opening in the flames there came
More, by their faces I could see held me in doubt.

These as the others met they passing kissed,
Somewhat like emmets on their line of way,
When each the other greets in short desist,—
Content with lightest feast, in no desire to stay.

Their kindly greeting past, a clamour rose
Between two parties meeting thus below.
Of Sodom and Gomorrah wailing those;
The others, "Pasipha took entrance by the cow,

"With the young calf she might luxuriate."
Then not unlike the Cranes, to Tartarus side
In parties fly,—or Lybian sands await,
Some part the more for cold, others for heat decide.

But one alone not as with others blent,
Though in his weeping kept in former song,
Sent a deep cry that more convincement meant,—
Approaching nearer seemed the less to these belong.

And as a recognition seemed expressed,
I gave more heed: "Oh Soul," I said, "secure,
Though failing yet to find your peace and rest:—
These limbs of mine left not as crude and immature,

"In close relationship I yet can hold.
A Lady out of Heaven acquired the grace
That in my mortal form I might behold
Your kingdom, and not blind as others leave this place.

"Still as I think you have the wish to climb,
And in some Heavenly Lodge would fain reside,
Fuller of Love, and of an ampler clime,—
Tell me that in some future page I may not hide

"Who this may be who from a stupid crowd,
Can thus diverge, the others leave behind,
That in much coarsness their salvation cloud,
Only so stupid when in clamour these would find,

"As if some loftier thought was there fulfilled,
Where each is drawn in his peculiar way?"
"Oh thou," this said, "more blest in whom is willed
Within a better Church, in better hope to stay—

"Than with such people here to be thus blent;—
Kneeling so near triumphant Cæsar's feet,
In reign contrary to a first intent:
Whilst in the cries of Sodom our reproach we meet.

"Because if parted, in disgrace we find
Though still unburnt we share a shame's record,—
Likened to beasts that Nature's laws declined
In fire illumed have henceforth learned to loathe the word.

"Now having seen us in this smoking place
There much remains within your Realm to tell
Of name you know,—and in a like disgrace—
Though times not yet allow of that, if known of well.

"And if my name thy wish is still to know,—
Guido Giuncelli;—here my sin to purge
In good distress, if first alloy it show."
Then not less sadness had Lycurgus left to urge

Where still, two left, a mother's arms could bless,
Came to my heart soon as I heard his name:
"My Father, of my betters not the less;—
Whilst in the verse it gave love's sweetness for its claim."

Then without listening to the thought it sent,
From the far back, I looked with less of fear
Into the fire to which return was meant—
The offering of my service, at his feet would bear.

So much his affirmation brought belief—
Then he to me: "Thou hast here left behind
All that I hate, and from it seek relief,
Though Lethe fail to hide, and dark oblivion bind.

"But as thy words of me in truth must swear,
Tell me how is it thou can'st hear my name
Within such place and hold me in thy care?"
Then I, "That verse of thine a sweetness that could claim

"More than the others made in modern rhyme,
That in the ink of verse they made to flow."—
"Oh brother," then he said, "where thou wouldst climb
I see another near,—in mother's tongue could show

"More than all these," (and here his genius showed)
"The songs of love, and gift of prose Romance;—
Though some have to Limoges the more allowed;
Each holding his opinions,—as his own advance

"In Art or Reason, takes from him command,—
Many the older notes,—Guittone's admire,
Holding him up with praises made to hand,—
As might his verses most to excellence aspire.

"If hence to thee a privilege is shown,
In licence given thee to attend a church,
Where Christ is in his Abbey,—Abbot known,
One Pater nostro make for me, within thy kindly search.

"Where greatest care is given by those below,
Where sin no longer holds its power the same."—
Then giving place, perhaps one else to show,—
A second, who had prest behind,—he hurried to the flame,

Fast as might fishes to their fonts desire.
The other, my slight recognitions made,
I asked his name, if so I might inquire,—
Which seemed to me a gracious form, if thus delayed.

In his alacrity more to obey ;—
"Thy courtesy has given so much command
That answer I no longer could delay ;
I am Arnault, detained at my vain song's demand.

"Much that you saw in us is folly past,—
Which gives me joyful hope that prayer assigned,
May bring us out, and cool the fiery blast."—
Then back into the flame he passed to be refined.

PURGATORIO

Canto XXVII

THE ARGUMENT

Dante is impeded in his course by the intense brilliance of the Sun, which he hesitates to enter; but is persuaded to pass through. After sleeping in the shadow of a great rock, he has a dream; awakening sees a level country before them, where Virgil takes a final leave.

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Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XXVII

As at the first, the Sun's vibrating force
Spread in his Maker's sky the ensanguined red,
And drooped o'er Spain, where Libra marks his course,—
Then from the Ganges' waves refreshed in newness sped :—

Forth from the flame God's angel on the brink,
Stood in great joy and sang—"The pure in heart."—
With voice above our life—"Ye saintly, think
Not through this fire ye enter in, till life depart."

Whilst to that song, not deaf my inward ear,
I thought of him who in the grave had lain.—
As we pressed on. To me, "Come not thou near" :
Wherewith a lifted arm was barred, "Nor entrance gain."

Then Virgil turned to me,—the good escort :—
"Thou that not tasting death did torment know :—
Remember ! As from Gerion safely brought,
Nearer to God thou art, and what can harm thee now ?

"Know, that if through fire thou shouldst be led,
Into the midst thereof,—a thousand years
Would never singe the hairs upon thy head ;—
Or doubt ;—hold front thy garment's hem, see if that sears,—

"Then enter undismayed, unharmed pass through."
I against conscience and my contract stood:—
Which troubled him, and courage to renew,
"This is the wall that from Beatrice part thee could."

As at the name of Thisbe opened wide
The lids of Pyramus, that death had bound,—
Whilst gazing, changed to berry vermeil dyed:—
In my hard fate I turned at that remembered sound.

Shaking his head: "How long will this require?"
And then he smiled as if a child had tried
To lead as with an apple—front the fire
He placed me: Statius following us, there went as guide.

And when within, I would, had molten glass
Streamed to refresh me, so intense the glow;—
Spake the kind father, soothing whilst we pass,
"Soon shall thy eyes behold thy loved Beatrice now."

There guided us a voice of song without,
Whilst we attentive, following close the sound,—
Came forth of it, a higher step to mount,
And from amidst the light, the voice that led us found.

"Ye blessèd of My Father, come!" the song;—
Whilst too intense the glow to choose our way;—
Then evening fell; not changing for less strong,
Though veiled in ardour beams, that westward turned the day.

With a huge rock projecting on one side,
I took my path, that shaded thus the sun,
And made with lessening force, in darkness hide
The ascending steps, before to mount we had begun.

Then by a gleam of light the glory left,
Ere darkness fell on all the horizon dark,
Each of us made a pillow in the cleft
Which had denied ascent, though in desire we passed.

And not unlike the goats that skip and bound
Upon a topmost crag, their meal supplied,
Silently ruminate, and closing round,
Hide from the sun, whereon for pasturage they relied.

Meanwhile their Pastor on the hillside, all
Regardful watches, for their safety stays
A guardian, lest mischance one might befall ;—
Resting in that peculiar place for their delays.

Thus did our company allotments each
Find in the grotto, sheltered from the day,
And for a little while ere sleep might reach,
I watched the stars, grown large and of intenser ray.

And whilst I pondered on the new surprise,
Sleep overcame me—sleep that ofttimes gives
An olden fact seen in a newer guise ;
The hour, I think, when Venus with her ardent ray revives.

A lady, young and beautiful in dream,
Bending amidst a flowery mead I saw,—
Singing, she asked my name, as by the stream
She culled the flowers, therein reflected from the shore.

"Leah, I am called," she said : "it pleaseth me
With my white hands to make a garland fair ;—
But Rachel with her beauteous eyes can see
Mirrored, and all day long, the flowers that deck her hair.

"In her enjoyment all my pleasures take :
She for adornment, and for work am I."—
Now had the lovely dawn begun to break,
Which to the pilgrim tells that glorious day is nigh.

The darkness fleeing all around, and sleep
Departing with it, I too, then arose :
Said the great master, "Soon the fruit thou'lt reap
Hid in the boughs,—a peace, the mortals crave to ease
their woes."

Thus Virgil spake, and never New Year's gift
In promise charmed me like the words he spake,—
As onward still upon the rock-bound clift
To mount, did my desires their apter pinions make.

"There where the Mount was gained by steppings higher,
The eyes of Virgil turned and fixed on me:—
"The temporal seen, and the eternal fire,
Further no more, my son, I can discern for thee.

"Thy pleasure now must take thy Teacher's part,
As I have led thee hither in my skill,—
Beyond this steep, no further goes my art,
Whereon thou didst rely, and knew no other's will.

"Behold the Sun in front that shows thee light;
Behold the herb, the flowers in wooded dells,
Born solely of the earth; till meets thy sight
Those watchful, beauteous eyes wherein delight then dwells.

"Eyes, full of tears, that brought me to thy side;—
Stay if thou wilt, or travel, at thy choice;
No longer with thee now can I abide,
No more direct thy way, by sign or guarding voice.

"Free as by right, thy own decision make;
In wisdom now no failure can be thine;
Henceforth I leave thee, thy own path to take;
Crowned, and with sceptre from me, make thee sole consign."

PURGATORIO

Canto XXVIII

THE ARGUMENT

Dante, left with Statius, arrives at the entrance of the Earthly Paradise, where he meets with an Angelic being (the Lady Matilda), who discourses with him on higher enjoyments, and hints at his future, as the Poet of Paradise.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XXVIII

AND now I go to look around, and stray
Within the sacred forest's olive green;
My sight, attempered to the newer day,—
In leisure wandering through the paths between.

Where came no haunting fear of leave-take soon;
Contentedly I breathed the odorous air
Of a sweet morn that knows not eve or noon,
And felt its softest touch breathed on my forehead there.

Whilst waving branches beckoned me to stay
Where first the holy mountain's shadow fell;
And midst the foliage, birds attuned their lay;
No doubt but they were wise, and would direct me well.

As full of joy in early morning's hour
They sang their entertainment in the shade,
That was exchanged from the sirocco's power,
In pine woods of Chiassi, whence their flight was made.

Whilst I, so late arrived from the delay
Of ancient shores into a kingdom new,
Had scarcely power as yet to know my way
Within the sacred grove, and find a pathway through.

Lo! on my left, a streamlet hid near by,
In rippling wavelets ran beneath the grass,
Within the shade made browniest tint thereby,
Where never sunlight fell, or glimpse of moon might pass.

Yet of all waters I could taste before,
In unmixed sweetness this had pleased me best,
The while I took my way along its shore,
Admiring novelties that much my soul imprest.

And as I wondered at the marvellous store
Of fresh varieties around me strewed,
Beheld a sight that made me marvel more,
And in its loveliness all other thoughts subdued.

Beneath the branches in the shady bowers
A lady all alone there roamed about,
Singing whilst she selected flower from flowers,
That with their varied hues tinted her path throughout.

"Oh! beauteous Lady, that from Sun's love beams
Hast drawn thy brightness, if I may divine
That outer looks speak as the heart beseems,—
Wilt thou come nearer, so I list that song of thine.

"Thou dost remind me of a tale of yore,—
When Proserpina, gathering flowerets fair
In the lone fields at Springtime, lost her store
Of May blooms, and her anxious mother's watchful care."

Then as the Lady towards the brooklet came
That still divided us,—hastening to meet,
In a light dance, careful she threw the same,
Rosied, or lyly-bell'd, and cast them at my feet.

The while unchanged her pure and honest eyes,
In answer to my prayer she makes consent,—
And now her voice across the stream supplies
The meaning to her words, which had but music lent.

Nearer approached the grassy streamlet's bed,
Thither she sent her eyes across to mine;
And ne'er such light 'neath Venus' eyebrow sped
From bow she gave her son, making it his ensign.

Smiling she came along the farthest side,
Still plucked the flowers, holding these in her hand,—
Flowers that the earth had ne'er on seed relied,—
Three paces off as yet, beyond the stream to stand.

Not Hellespont which Xerxes crossed, I ween
To curb all human pride in other men,
Or sea, Leander hating, swarm between
From Sestos to Abydos, gave me more chagrin.

"Strangers and unaccustomed to this place,
My smiling countenance might ill beseem
Propriety, the while you fail to trace
My motive, as I answer you across the stream.

"But that sweet Psalm, 'The Lord hath made me glad,'
Will best interpret of my joyful mien;—
And thou that foremost stood, and prayed me had
Nearer to come and sing to thee, less space between,—

"If thou hast aught to question of these grounds,
I could inform thee as I best may know."
And my reply:—"I find these forest sounds,
Heard from within their shade, and watery stream below

"Surpass my former knowledge and report."
And she: "I can explain from whence proceeds
Thy admiration of the place thus sought,
And clear thy comprehension of the clouds it breeds.

"The Highest Good, who for his pleasure made
Man good and blest, had given him here to stay
In earnest of the bliss that cannot fade,—
But by his own default was hurried soon away.

" For a defective love, and fruited tree,
Changed honest gaiety and soul's delight ;—
And thus the troubled water that we see
Rising from hence, exhaled from damp and earthly blight,

" Which never cures in man the vain desire
It henceforth leaves, partaken of in draught ;
The while that Mount t'wards heaven we see aspire
Is freed from all the raging thirst this leaves thereaft ;

" For there, an atmosphere untaint is found,
In primal force circling around the height,
Where nothing thwarts, or hinders from the ground
The living air that mounting, mounts in highest flight,

" But makes beneath the umbrageous woods resound ;
And gives the tender plant unerring blow,
That in its kiss had nestling virtue found,
And in the blizzard of the north lies waste and withered
now.

" Whilst other climes, as so vouchsafed of heaven,
Bring forth a virtuous stock from diverse seed,—
Deem it no less a marvel if is given
Unseeded plants to live and thrive, as so decreed.

" For thou should'st know that this is holy ground,
Filled with all flowers that not from seed had grown,
Bearing the fruits that everywhere abound,
And gathered in the ripening of this clime alone.

" This water that we see owes not its birth
To vaporous air, congealed and held impure,
Falling in showers, again to leave the earth,
But springs from out a fountain sealed and sure ;

" And of the will of God largely partakes,
As forth it issues in two channels bound ;
This one, towards virtue a new pathway makes,
Where memory of the past of sin no more is found.

" The other all the good to memory brings ;—
And one is Lethe, and the other's name
Eunoe ; but no taste is in its springs
Of sweetness, unless Lethe bears away the blame ;

" Then in its relish does all taste excel.—
Whereas I now have satisfied thy quest
For further knowledge, I may end this well,
With a Heart Token of my own joined to the rest.

" Nor deem it less a prize if, wandering by,
A hinted promise into light I bring ;
The Poets that a golden age could spy,
Perchance, in dreams Parnassian, of this land might sing.

" Which innocent of human root now grows
In a perpetual spring the ripened fruit ;
Where nectar from one only fountain flows,
Whereof the praises sung can never more be mute."

As from the Poets then aside she turned,
I saw a recognition and a smile
At what from her conclusion had been learned ;—
And toward the lovely lady set my face meanwhile.

PURGATORIO

Canto XXIX

THE ARGUMENT

Dante having followed the lady by the windings of the stream, sees in the forest a brilliant light, whence there issues a procession of attendants on the Car of Beatrice, drawn by the winged Griffin, which directs its course toward Dante.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XXIX

AND as a lady to her lover sings,
She sent the notes in ending of her lay—
"Blessed are those whose sin a covering brings";—
As by the forest stream she took her onward way.

Like to the nymphs given in sole decrees
The shades to deepen, or the sun set free,—
Between the branches of o'erhanging trees
With a light step she passed; I following close might see.

And as my feet in unison with hers
Trod the green margin of the parting stream,
With steps agreeing as each step recurs,
Together, for a hundred paces it would seem;

Where the impeded water rose in height,
And stopped me in its onward course of flow,
The pathway underneath it lost to sight,
My lady turned towards me there, and spake she now;

"My Brother, mark thou this, and listen well."—
Lo: all the forest broke in light untold,
So that I marvelled if the lightning fell,
But lightning breaks to pause, and this seemed floods of gold.

That in my thought I said, "What thing is this?"
Whilst a melodious sound along the air,
Reminded me of Eve's default in bliss,
As between Earth and Heaven she might have wandered there.

Sole woman, and so formed to be the head,
Yet not allowing of another's will,
From these delights ineffable had fled,—
Else hers, first felt, had ours continued still.

And as there came to me the primal taste
Of overhanging and eternal peace,
That then had somewhat of my mirth displaced,
In the mid air, between the boughs, I saw the light increase.

And intermingled with it came sweet song.
O consecrated, holy virgins, ye
In cold and watch with whom I suffered long,
For that remembrance in my need, now succour me.

Or haply, Helicon might wander o'er,
And bathe me in the fulness of his stream,
Or might Uranus with his teaching lore
Strengthen my thoughts, to give in verse my theme.

Onward a space were Seven trees of gold,
As in the distance seen, and so removed
That such resemblance only might be told,
Till near approach had all their real nature proved.

Though common objects are by sense deceived,
These in their distance did not lose their height,—
By virtue of a faculty received,
As golden candelabra, were revealed to sight.

Whilst in the voice of song, Hosannas sound,
The beauteous garniture of golden light
Shone with a purer brilliance than had crowned
The moon, serene in the mid heaven, at dark of night.

I, in my wonder, turned me to my Guide;
With like surprise depicted in his face
He bade me look where might be seen beside
A Bridal train, or like, advancing with slow pace.

The lady chiding me: "Why dost thou gaze
With so much ardour on the living light
Nor that which thence proceeds thy wonder raise?"
As forth they came like chiefs of men all clothed in white.

And of such whiteness none might ever say.—
Restored, the pathway on the left hand side,
The shining water in its devious way,
As old adventure, gave a better light to guide.

I saw the flaming points of glistening gold,
That left their light in the surrounding air,
Tinting it with the colour sevenfold,
That lends the Sun his bow, the Moon her crown to wear.

Leaving the light behind, yet still in view,
Seemed wisest course, and urged ten steps return;—
The four and twenty Seniors, two and two
Advancing, crowned with Fleur du Luce, I could discern.

Beneath a sky so beautiful the train,
Singing as with one voice, "Blessed art thou
Of Adam's daughters, and shalt blest remain
In this thy loveliness, for evermore as now."

Since that the turf and flowery path were free,
And I had parted on the farthest shore
From Company Elect, I now might see,
Proceeding amidst Light of Lights, Four others more.

Each with a chaplet of green leaves was crowned,
Each had six wings, and every feather eyed
As Argus had, in fabled days renowned:—
These living eyes, and not to ignorance allied.

But rhyme or lecture fails me to transcribe
In words diffuse their forms, or I might tire;
Read how Ezekiel writing could describe
How from the North there came a whirlwind, cloud, and fire

In vision as was seen, and as was writ,
Such like were these, save numbering of their wings;
And there I hold with John, as seems most fit,
For that his number six, similitude best brings.

The space behind these four a Car contained
Revolving on two wheels, triumphant borne
By a leashed Griffin that was there detained,
And fastened lightly at his shoulder, so was drawn.

As tendon on the one and other wing,
An intermediary had joined the three,
That nothing unforeseen might evil bring;
Guiding it with a skill I ne'er before could see:

On wing of feathery gold the air to fly,—
And others two of white, or misty red;
There ne'er was Roman Car upheld so high
With Africanus jubilant; or that Augustus led.

Not to the Sun was given a power like this,
When at the prayer of suppliants below,
Jove wrecked the Car of Phaeton, in his bliss
Wheeling to Earth;—consumed in conflagration's glow.

Four ladies there, that dexterous guide the wheels,
With dancing step advanced; one like a rose
Such as at night the light of fire reveals,
And one transparent tint of emeralds might disclose.

Another likened to soft fallen snow,
Now and again changing to roseate tint,
And to the song of this, or fast or slow,
The others moved in rhyme, mingling together went.

On the left hand and joining in the dance
Came Four in purple clothed, within their quest;
And one behind the others that advance,
Was treble eyed, with sight revealed above the rest.

And near approaching to the throng of those,
Two elder men, in different habit dressed,
But honest purpose made companions close:
One, with some knowledge, Hippocratian, seemed possessed,—

That human nature was of costliest store;
The other with a cure had stayed his mind,
And by the sharp and glittering blade he bore,
Filled me with sore affright, across the brook assigned.

Four, whom their humble garb did best befit,
And one behind, an aged man alone,
Seeming as if in sleep, but keen of wit;
Like the first set, these seven, were by their vestments known.

Not these had lily garlands on their brow;
Rather, with rose, or ruddiest flowers were crowned;
One might have sworn, in distance as they show,
That they were all with fire, above the eyebrows bound.

Soon as the Car approaching near me came,
A thunderous sound was heard,—these worthy men
That with their talk had somewhat blocked the way,
At the first signal ended their discourses, there and then.

PURGATORIO

Canto XXX

THE ARGUMENT

Beatrice descends in a Car, drawn by the Griffin of a double nature, and rebukes Dante.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XXX

FORTH from the central Light that stars surround,
Which knows not rise or set, or birth or end,
Nor veil of mist that skirts the faulty ground,—
An unseen Power to guide, and wandering footsteps bend;—

Forth, through the seven starr'd gate which marks the bound,
The car approached, leaving a light behind;—
Flying as towards its peace, and with a sound
From the mid heaven as voice borne on the winged wind.

"Veni de Libano, Sponsa mia!
"Veni de Libano! Veni"; led
That higher angel of a hundred choir,
With voice that wakes to winged life the caverned dead:

"Blessed is He that cometh," floats along
Responsive, as the angelic train anew
Take up the message of that peace in song;
Whilst with full hands, each way, fresh lilies round they strew.

Oft have I seen at dawn the eastern skies
Rose-tinted, opposite where lay the calm ;—
And seen the sun in clouded crimson rise,
So wrapt and veiled in mist, the sight received no harm.

Straight as a needle towards the pole may draw,
Advanced the car ; and veiled in white from view,
And olive wreathed, the form of one it bore,
Seen through a cloud of flowers attendant angels threw.

Clad in a mantle, as the verdure, green,
Beneath, the crimson caught from living flame ;—
Stirring the tremor of my soul ; unseen
The cause, that even from childhood in her presence came.

When though I knew her not, in trembling plight,
I turned to Virgil, for his strengthening aid :—
But Virgil had withdrawn himself from sight ;—
Bereaved me of my friend,—my sole dependence made.

Then turned I, at the sound of my own name,
Where stationed at the edged side of the car,
Commander of the angelic force she came,
Still veiled, as when the cloud of flowers fell from afar.

"Dante!" she said ; and here I must record
The name she uttered :—"Wherefore is the need
To weep for Virgil? Yet another sword
Erewhile shall pierce thee through, when thou shalt weep indeed."

Across the stream she turned on me her eyes,
Although the veil, descending from her head,
Wreathed like Minerva's, still was a disguise ;—
Right royally kept back the colder words she said :

"Look at me well :—Beatrice sure am I ;
And hast thou deigned thee to ascend the Mount?
And hast thou learned where happiness may lie?"—
Thus tauntingly she bid me take in my account.

With downcast eyes, as in the stream below
My face was mirrored, soon I turned in grief,
For such a weight of shame was on my brow,
That to the grassy bank I turned me for relief.

As to the gifted Mother, Son may bow,
Reproof had touched me sore with arrowy haste;
The power that came from her I felt it now;—
'Tis love that to the pity gives a bitter taste.

Silent she stood; whereat the angelic train
Join with their voices in the Psalm of Peace:—
"In thee, Lord, have I hoped," so rang the strain
Unto this last; "My feet hast set"; and there they cease.

As showers of drifted snow, piled high, remain
On the live rafters of supporting trees
That clothe the back of Appeninia's chain,
Brought from Sclavonian climes by the rough northern breeze

Melting, diffuse them into copious streams,
If so the roof falls in, beneath the sighs
Of the soft south,—that temper'd with its beams
Unfettered find free course and in deep channels rise.

Thus was I fixed, without a sigh or tear;
Till touched by note of heavenly harmonies,
The listening soul responsively may hear,
Bringing to eyes their tears, and to the breast its sighs.

But less the fount of tearfulness then broke,
And less my heaving breast the sigh supplied,
Than when accosting her, the words were spoke:
"Lady, why dost thou thus distress him?" pitying cried.

Unmoved, still on the right side of the car,
Her feet firm set against the ridge she stood;—
With voice that floated upward and afar,
Responsive to the angel's plaint, that saw my softened mood.

"Ye who your vigils keep in endless day,
And know not night, or sleep, how should you know
What passes in the world of his delay;—
Rather to him my answer comes, who weepeth so.

"That sorrow with transgression even stand.
Not his a fate by yonder orbs defined,
Directors of the seed cast o'er the land,
And marked in men for praise or blame, as stars combined.

"But in the largeness of the grace divine,
Descending from a higher altitude
In vaporous clouds;—visits none may define,
That feed the scattered seed, with gathered strength renewed.

"This one in his new life was blest with all
Exceeding virtues, that in him attained
A marvellous power;—but that rank seed will fall,
And flourish most in fruitful soil, if not restrained.

"Once I was near, aiding him with my will;
And my young eyes led him in paths aright;
With me he travelled willingly, until
On threshold of life's second stage, I fled from sight.

"Then he turned back, and other's talk would share;—
So soon as I had changed my mortal state
I was less dear to him, though grown more fair,
And as my virtues grew, so did his love abate.

"And swift his steps were turned in paths untrue;
Imaginary bliss he sought to find,
Which no fulfilment in its promise knew;
The inspiration of my wisdom left behind.

"Vainly in dreams, I strove to bend his will;
In other ways had his deliverance sought;
By night and day revisiting, until
I found the sword to stop the way, too short;

"And he must see where ruined souls abide :—
Unto this end, the gates of death I reached :
The one who hitherward has been his guide,
With prayers and tears of him his watchful aid beseeched.

"'Tis not of ordinance divine assured,
That a new life be gained in the high sphere ;
That Lethe should be past, and life secured,
Without a signal given of the repentant tear."

PURGATORIO

Canto XXXI

THE ARGUMENT

Beatrice continues her discourse, and Dante in contrition falls to the ground, when he is drawn swiftly through the river to the opposite shore, near to Beatrice.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XXXI

"ACROSS the sacred river where I stay,
Float back thy answer from the opposed shore,
If that I said sounds harsh and bitter,—say
'It is not truth'—and then the thrust will harm no more.

"I will absolve thee if such be thy plea;
Say, 'It is true': and accusation given
In seeming harshness only then will be
Link binding to confession,—firmer riven."

Propriety thereat became confused:—
The voice first moved and suddenly it stopped;—
A power within arresting whilst it used;—
For though I would have spoken, speech thereby seemed
locked.

As, with the fragile bow, whose strength we try,—
With too much tension on its corded arc
Has less impulse to make the arrow fly,—
And in uncertainty oft shoots beside the mark:—

So I beneath the stress of that grave charge,
Brake into sobs and tears, mingled with sighs,
The voice its channel failing to enlarge;—
As thus she spake again;—my faltering answer tries.

"When my regards towards thee did not tire,
All my endeavours spent on thee so much;—
What thwarted thy advance at my desire,
And why was lost that large expenditure on such?"

After the heaving of a bitter sigh
My lips were opened:—faint my voice replied,
"The things of time allured my steps, when I
Lost thee beyond recall;—sight of thy face denied."

Then she—"Hadst thou been silent or would yet disclaim
The accusation, it had none the less
Been thy transgression; noted by the same
All-seeing Judge, who from His seat hears thee confess.

"But in our court it is the privilege,
Soon as confession's tears break from the cheek,
The sin's accuser makes the sharpened edge
Run counter to the wheel's revolving break.

"And as a better way the same to bear
Of this thy error,—whensoe'er again
Thou hearest the Syren's voice thou mayest beware;—
Whose song has so much grief divided in her strain.

"Hear now from me what should have been thy part,
When I no longer wore my mortal frame;—
If pleased thee nought in nature or in art,
When that enclosed me, mixed, went to its earth the same:—

"Seeing nought charmed thee henceforth, why again
Another mortal thing shouldst thou desire?
Rather it had become thee in thy pain,
As there were none like me, to me thou shouldst aspire.

"Nor with a downward flight, pointed thy wing,
Anticipatory of another blow
In short-lived vanities, and a young thing;
Of other gauds erewhile the transient use to know.—

"The new-fledged, inexperienced bird will fly,
Once, twice, or thrice, athwart the fowler's snare;
But older and experienced birds espy
The harm that lurks within, and hence avoid with care

With hanging head, and downcast eyes—a child
In earned rebuke I stood, defenceless, coy:—
"For greater grief if harmed by accents mild,
Look up at me and raise thy beard, once beardless boy."

With less resistance does the sturdy oak
Yield to the northern blast, uprooted lie,—
Or by the southern wind;—the words she spoke
Yielded their answer;—by my beard rebuked was I;

And as my face, long in distress, was met
By hers in primal loveliness, my eyes
Closed to their use of light:—Beatrice yet
Came back; the double nature in her no disguise.

Beneath her veil, across the verdant shore,
Passed out to me the old familiar sense
Of her own self:—than of those others more;—
Guardians that Heaven had sent, and in her train, from thence.

Repentance, punishing, now had its way;
Heart-breaking recollections with it came;
And vanquished, fallen on the ground I lay,
Feeling the sting was in her love, more than her blame.

Whilst none of those surrounding knew the cause;—
But when my heart to virtue was regained,
There one alone came near me;—without pause
Of swiftness, drew me from above, and with firm hold retained

Across the stream; then only did I hear
Reaching the blessed shore, a sweet refrain,—
"Asperges me"; from those, there standing near;—
Of such delight too great the memory to retain.

And where the pool was deep, her arms held fast
Submerged me for a moment, when the rest
With joy received me, out the river past;
And in a wreathed dance and song their joy expressed.

"Nymphs on the earth we were, now stars in heaven;
Before Beatrice to the world came down
We were ordained; unto her service given;—
Now lead thee to her eyes; but first direct thy own

"To those three orbs, whose light we left behind,
Of more ecstatic joy and depth profound,"
Thus sang they, and the while my looks inclined
From whence Beatrice took her course nearing the ground.—

"Hold not thy gaze, behold before thee set
The emerald light, wherewith love did disarm,
And drew thy eyes, to eyes more brilliant yet
Grown, from above the skies in doubled force of charm."

As in a glass the sun reflects its beams,
With no less ardour does its nature burn,
And in reflection doubled it but seems
Not yet another, but variety that we discern.

Reader, of this I marvelled much, I own,
Seeing unchanged the incandescent light
Transmitted to its idol,—but still one,
Filling my soul thereby with wonder and delight.

For this: that I might show the high-born tribe
Neglected acts behind the advancing three;
To the angelic dance my song inscribe;—
"Beatrice, turn that *he* thy holy eyes may see,

"Whose song thou wert, and faithful found:—for thee,
Moved by thy love, he trod the paths of woe;—
The grace thou showest, even to us shall be;—
Unveil to him thy eyes; thy second beauty show."

Oh, splendour of Eternal Living Light!
Who, pale and wan, would dwell beneath the shade
Of his Parnassus;—drink of founts less bright;—
With mental vision too obscured the souls to aid;

Nor give to thee the record of that bliss
Once he beheld, and now for thee can solve;—
That thou mightst take it to thyself from this
When in the air, to heavenly harmonies thou shalt dissolve.

PURGATORIO

Canto XXXII

THE ARGUMENT

The Celestial Escort prepares to depart, and Beatrice descends from the Car.

Dante is recalled from a day-dream to find her seated at the foot of the tall tree, where strange reverses happen to the Car, which he is instructed to record in the World, because of the evil therein.

PURGATORIO

Canto XXXII

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XXXII

TO quench my ten years' thirst, I fixed my gaze;—
"Avert thine eyes," they warned, lest now the sight
Of so much brilliance should, in unveiled rays,
O'erpower my vision,—faint with the immortal light.

Restful I turned, and could discern once more
The glorious procession moving round,
That had been hidden from my sight before
In the intensity that further vision bound.

Towards the seven-starred gate and central sun,
Backing their course;—as with their shields in sign,
An army flies, till thereof every one
Circling is seen to turn, and duly forms in line.

As towards the car the heavenly escort bends
Guarding retreat, that it may pass before;—
The griffin on his way so softly wends
That not a plume is stirred, as his blest charge he bore.

Past the high wood, despoiled and leafless now,
By the crest serpent;—we with steps joy bent
Followed their lead, till arrow's flight from bow
Thrice winged,—Beatrice from the car made her descent.

And still I heard the murmur of the trees
Adam denuded, where I saw a plant
Of flowers and leaves bereft like unto these
Till bowery branches crowned the stem so sere and scant.

Such as in India, where none grows so tall;—
Umbrageously it spreads its tufted head,
And highest admiration gains from all,
As higher yet, and higher, widening branches spread.

Blessed art thou, the griffin, that tastes not,
Nor ever pecked the sweetness in the wood
That turns to bitterness of taste when got;—
As those may learn who eat of undigestive food.

Then all the stout-limbed and dismantled trees
Murmuring replied;—and the voiced griffin too;—
"So in the seed preserved the just abide."—
Leashing the car to the reft stem in trembling haste then flew.

How may our plants prepare in early spring
To push their buds, ere the celestial sign
Has mingled with the sun;—nor burst their ring
Till towards a higher star his chariot wheels incline

Colouring with less of purple, more of rose,
The opening blossom that renews the plant,
In its bare branch, or lonely else it grows?
I apprehend it not, so must my notes be scant.

If, as in painter's art, I had arranged
My colours, with the model in my eyes,—
How to a water rose a nymph was changed,—
Fated my song, like hers only to end in sighs.

Thus was I lulled to sleep, or sleep that feigned;—
When suddenly a flash of radiance flew,—
Absorbed the veil of mist,—and sense regained,
I heard a voice that called, "Arise, what dost thou do?"

Thou that shouldst see in flower, the fruited sweet
That angels eat of in unsated feast;—
Called by a voice, as at their Master's feet
Those heard on Tabor's Mount when earlier schools decreased.

Then as I turned, close standing by, I saw
The gentle lady who had guided through
And made me pass the flood to reach the shore;—
"Where is Beatrice now?" as doubtfully I grew.

"Behold her seated underneath the bough
New grown; whilst her companions gather round;
The rest attendants on the griffin now,
Parted from us, their songs sweeter and more profound

"Since his diffusive voice may not be known";—
And whilst her wistful eyes seclusion sought,
I found her seated on the turf alone,
Sole guardian of the car the griffin lately brought.

The seven nymphs circling round the cloistered shade,
Held in their hands aloft the lights that burned;
No gusty winds disturbing,—as she said
"Thou that art in the forest now, with me returned

"Shalt dwell for ever, Citizen of Rome,
Whereof Christ is a Roman; but whilst here
See what reverses to the car will come,
And for the evil in the world, record it there."

And I, to her behest, as to a law
Attentive, not with less speed than flash
From distant cloud,—Jove's bird dart down I saw,
And from the yet unfruited tree the bark to snatch.

Loosing the car, so leashed, with all his force;—
The while it yielded as a ship forlorn
Is vanquished by the waves beyond its course,—
Either to starboard, or to larboard, fiercely borne.

Lo and behold! a fox, greedy and fat,
Within the right side of the triumphal car!
Hung'ring he looked for all good things, whereat
My Lady, chiding him,—he ran fast as he might and far.

Then came an eagle down, and from his breast
Plucked out the feathers, lining it with care,—
Whilst from the Heaven there came a voice distressed,
"Alas! poor bark of mine, what evil freight to bear!"

Then from the earth beneath, between the wheels,
Issued a dragon with his forkèd tail
As when an angry wasp its sting reveals,—
Shattered the stand thereof, making it no avail.

And there remained, lodged in the tall rank grass,
Mingled with down, plucked with much good intent
It might be;—grass that revives so soon as pass
The wheels;—swift as a breathed sigh when lips are rent.

And thus transformed, I saw the holy ark
Send out four heads,—one to each corner tied;
And three in front crowned with two horns, I mark,—
The other four alike, but with one horn supplied.

Secure as rock, mounted the ridge to ride,
There sat a Harlot with the wandering eyes;—
And that none take it from him, at her side
A giant monster stood and close with kisses plies.

Till as on me she chanced her eyes to cast,
In jealous rage he scourged her; the show-car
Dislodged and dragged;—till in the wood at last,
Obscured from sight they passed, hid in the shades afar.

PURGATORIO

Canto XXXIII

THE ARGUMENT

Beatrice rises and leaves the tree, placing her Seven companions in the front; then conversing with Dante, she predicts darkly to him distant events connected with her Car. Afterwards he is invited to drink of the waters of Eunoe (a Greek name signifying "good thoughts,") and thence is prepared to ascend with Beatrice towards the regions of Paradise.

Dante

PURGATORIO

Canto XXXIII

"THE Heathen, Lord, are come," changed the sweet psalm ;—
Beatrice, listening to the notes had sighed ;—
Her colour changed to burning red, from calm,
Seeming than Mary scarce less sad the cross beside.

Then, rising from the ground, said, "Sisters mine,
Somewhile you see me not, but short the time,
And you again shall see me."—With a sign
She set the Seven in front, we following in the rhyme.

Yet scarcely had she paced ten steps the ground,—
Her aspect changed ; tranquil her eyes met mine :—
"Conversing with thee, near to me be found,
And listening as thou wouldst, closely thine ear incline.

"Brother," she said, "say, hast thou not a mind
To question aught of me as thus we tread?"
I like to some whom their superiors bind
In too much reverence, voice whose half has fled :—

"Lady, of my desire thou knowest the good
Thou wilt inform me as may best beseem."—
And she : "Henceforth to rid thee of restraint, I would
That thou shouldst speak no more as man who has a dream.

"Know that the vase we saw the serpent brake,
Was, and is not:—ye who feel not the blow,
Believe, a sop God's vengeance will not slake,
Nor long without an heir, the self-plucked eagle show.

"For the car, grown a sham, became a prey,
And I who watched, with certainty repeat;—
To give to the near stars the time, that they
May rest secure, above all hindrance and defeat.

"In the which he *Five Hundred, Ten, and Five;*[1]
The sent of God, shall slay the furious one,
And giant that transgressed with her to live;—
But leave it dark, lest Fear and Sphinx should make thee shun.

"For that the intellect has not attained
To it as yet; but when the fact is, then
The Naiads that will solve the enigma dark.
Reveal it uncondemned for sin; nor blamed of men.

"Note thou, and as from me bear thou this word,
And set it as a sign of truth to them
Whose lives are but a race to death; record
How the tree was a second time robbed in its topmast stem.

"And any who would maim or rob that tree,
Blaspheme in fact the God who made it grow
For his own service, and to holy be;
Whereof the first soul ate, self-punishment to know.

"Thy genius sleeps, if it has not discerned
The reason why so excellent a thing
Should have her crown reversed, thy thoughts have yearned
In vanity towards Elsa's petrifying spring.

[1] Beatrice dying in the year 1290, the prophecy, ten years later, might seem fulfilled in the abolition of the Inquisition in Spain, 1813, during the Napoleonic Era, ending in the Five Hundred and Fifteenth year after the Vision.—TRANSLATOR.

"And if its pleasures had not dyed thee dark
As Pyramus, the berry,—thou mightst know
In many ways God's justice did but mark
With interdict the Tree, its moral force to show.

"But as I see thy mind to stone is turned,
And dark in sin, dazzled, thou canst not write,
Depict at least what from me thou hast earned,—
Thy pilgrim staff with palm enwreathed bear well in sight."

Then I: "As wax will from a seal retain
The image set, so is thy gifted word
Unalterably fixed within my brain;—
Why should its meaning vault above my wished record?"

"Because, if thou wouldst know," she said, "the school
Which thou hast followed has no power given;
And so discordant is it in its rule,
As far from the Divine as earth from heights of heaven."

Then I replied: "Time I remember not
I was estranged from thee, there conscience brave
Yields no remorse."—"If thou hast this forgot,"
Smiling—"At least recall how lately thou hast passed
through Lethe's wave;

"And if the dense mist of thy argument
Does not within some dark oblivion hide
A wilful fault, that in attendance went;—
Which thy remembrance now no longer may abide.

"Hence shall my words of verity disclose
So much as in discourse may be revealed
To thy rude sight."—As now the sun uprose,
And with retarded steps towards his meridian wheeled

The Seven that in the vanguard held their lights,
Stood in full gaze at the unwonted glare,—
As if in forest shade of coolness, heights
Of Alpine scenery glanced through opening branches bare.

And right before us to my sight arose,
As from one font, Tigris and Euphrates,
That parting friendship different channels chose:—
"Oh, light and glory of our race! Why part so these?

"What is this water that is seen to start
From the same course, and then to part astray?
This owest thou me."—"Matilda should impart
To thee that knowledge now; entreat her, she will say."

As one who from herself the blame would shift,
Spake the fair damsel: "This and things yet more,
Tell him by me, and be thou sure the drift
Through Lethe has not hid it from him o'er and o'er."

Beatrice then:—"Perhaps the greater cure
Which overpowers within all selfish thought,
Has made it to his memory's eyes obscure;—
But see where Eunoe flows hard by, and thence is brought:—

"There lead him, and before as was thy use,
Revive his fainting virtue in that wave."
And as a gentle soul makes no excuse,
But in another's will, her own well pleased will have,

So did the gentle lady lead me there;—
Saying to Statius, "Come thou too with him."—
Had space allowed, reader, I would declare
The unending sweetness of that draught drank at its brim.

And I returned from the most holy wave,
Revived, and seeming like a plant to rise
With leaves renewed, when freshening waters lave;—
So was I then made pure and fit to mount the starry skies.

PARADISO

Canto I

THE ARGUMENT

Dante here directs his prayer to the Universal Light, for guidance in describing the marvels which he sees whilst ascending with Beatrice towards the polar stars and the Central Sun.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto I

THE glorious Light of Him that moves, surrounds,
And penetrates the Universe, when there
Enlightening all the more or less is found:—
Into a Heaven most filled, through the translucent air

I fly, to see such things I would depict,
Had power not failed me, hence returned below,—
Because approached, they seemingly restrict
Our intellect its height, nor memory's force can show.

Truly so much as I may now retain
Of that most holy Kingdom's treasure blent
Within my thought, shall in my song remain:—
Oh, good Apollo, for this latest work thy aid be sent,

And take this vessel in the powerful stay
Of thy command, as in a former course
Towards Parnassus once I jigged my way,
Be with me now, or I might fail in this discourse.

Enter into my breast and breathe, as there
From out its sheath once Marcia's limbs it drew.
Oh, virtue lend thyself, divinely fair,—
If but as shadow I might show that kingdom new.

Come near, make manifest thy lovely law,
And crown me after with such leafy spray
As shall be worthy of the things I saw ;—
If in low flight, Father I gather such, I may

Not triumph as a Cæsar, nor in wit
As Poet (so disgraced in human will),
That wears the Delphic Laurel's shine—transmit
To the Penean Daphne, jovial airs to fill.

Small sparks from out of greatest flames we see ;—
Than mine, another mightier voice may sound,
As of Cirraian citizens acclaimed to be ;—
For mortal's fire diverse,—lighting the world is found.

Away from this ;—where circles four join three,
In mightier course and with a larger star
To be conjoined ; than worldly lights to be
More tempered in a brilliant force than others are.

'Tis morning now, wherein so much of eve
Is blent ;—to where the empyrean white
Has filled the air,—whilst black behind we leave
Beatrice turned,—and on her left held me in flight

Facing the sun. Not swifter towards the skies
Vaulted an Eagle that had fixed its eye ;—
And as from out a sunbeam, beam might rise,
So was retained in me the power to mount on high.

And as a Pilgrim to his wish will turn,—
At that great height her eyes in mine infused
Imaginations I might well discern,
Nor fix my sight upon a sun to custom so unused,

Where much is known, that to the Earth below
Is hid in mercy to its human race.
Unhurt I wait not long where mightiest glow
Seemed as of molten iron poured into fire through space.

And at that instant, daylight above day
Increased, as if adorned by other Sun ;
Beatrice where its wide circumference lay
Had fixed her eyes,—whose far off light had then begun

In me a relish, such had Glaucus known
Whilst tasting of the weed beneath the sea,—
As made him with new gods consort alone :—
Such simile I meant only in word to be,

But not in power : similitude too low
For him the keeper of a larger grace ;
And if the Sun had made in me to know
A new creation,—Love of Heaven, Thy power I trace

In that circumference,—thy Eternal thought
Made manifest to me, inspired my song,—
So tempered and attuned,—with sunlight fraught
As not in depths beneath, where mist and rain belong.

The novelty of sound, and the great light,
All their effects I had desired to know,
But found my voice to fail me in that height ;—
Whilst she who there beheld me as I was below ;

And well acquainted with my soul's unrest,
Had first required of me an open speech,
And then began :—" Thou hast within thy breast
Too much of false imaginings for that thy eyes can reach

" And might discern ; but thou art so bereft ;—
Thou art not on the Earth,—as well believed ;
Nay, lightning following, in its pathway set
Was not more swift than thou, to run, and be received."

If at the first I doubted, now her smile
Had reassured me in the word she spake ;
Although another doubt behind, awhile
Perplexed me,—as I answered for her sake :

"I should be well contented here to stay
In this magnificence when I relive;—
If in my resurrection form I may,
As in my nature, all my admiration give."

Then she, oppressed, and with a sigh replied;—
Her eyes directed towards me with a look
Such as a mother might, delirious child:—
"That thing the most desired its order has forsook.

"Where we may see the higher creature formed
Out of eternal will, which was, and is,
And holds the former model so transformed:—
An order, as I say, inclining all to this

"Whence Nature in its diverse forms had part;—
Some nearest to their source, and some less near—
As they were moved, from different ports they start,—
In the great sea of being to the same point they steer.

"This one as towards the moon shall carry fire;—
And this, the mortal heart, come not so near;—
This pressed to Earth in crowds might less aspire;—
Not the mere creatures could the arrowed bow uprear;

"But those who hold their intellect and love
In Providence, adopted much for heaven;
Giving them quietude from Light above,
Whither they fly—to whom the swiftest wings are given.

"These whilst remaining in their place decreed,
Bear for their standard, Virtue, which so draws,
That those who follow it have joy indeed;—
And not amenable to those material laws

"Which hinder Art, and feed the sordid taste,
In a departure where so many run,
Who, having power to paint,—but paint for waste,—
As lightning scatters from the cloud, a force begun.

"Not so esteemed, not thus admired of all,
Be thy ascent, nor like a river's flow
From mountain's top to take a downward fall,
Descending from a height,—to depths as far below.

"The marvels here revealed to thee, at first
Impede and lay thee in the lowest place;—
From quiet Earth the living fire will burst."
Then upwards toward the Heaven she turned again her face.

PARADISO

Canto II

THE ARGUMENT

Arrived at the lowest star, the Moon, Beatrice converses with Dante concerning the differing apportionments of the Divine light ; suggested by the shadows in the Moon.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto II

O H ye that in light barks have followed mine,
And kept behind, desirous most to hear
Her singing as she cleaves the watery brine,—
Return, revisit your own shores, nor venture near,

Lest, peradventure, ye should lose your guide,
And in mid-ocean lost have sore return;
The watery way I take none took beside
Adventurous, and from none beside might learn.

Apollo guides, Minerva breathes the gale,
And a new muse discovers me the Pole:—
Ye others few whose eager quest might hail
Foretaste of angels' food, that never sates the soul,

Bring all your wit to follow in the track
Of this my ship, that marks a furrow now
In front, on either side sends equal back,—
Nor see less glory than on Jason fell, following the plough.

The thirst created that perpetual draws
The godlike to its kingdom, on will bear
With rapid flight till into heaven it soars;—
Beatrice thus, and I was in her guardian care.

Swift as an arrow started from the bow,
Soaring, I gazed upon a wondrous sight,
And turned my face to hers in fear, lest now
The works I did might not be hidden in that light.

Towards me her beauteous face she turned and said,
'Direct thy thoughts in thanks to God, as yet
Unto the nearest star thou hast been led."
That in the sunfire clear, an adamantine cloud seemed set,

Received us the eternal living pearl,—
As if a watery drop had in delay
A sunbeam held within it, that might curl,
United as one essence, undissolved to stay.

If I, whilst in the flesh might not conceive
How one dimension could another hold,—
Much more might one desire, and then believe
If of two natures joined of God and Man were told.

Not demonstrated, but fast held in faith,—
As at the first, by the first man believed.—
Then I replied: "My Lady, as thou saith,
I render thanks that from the mortal world I am received.

"But tell me whence arise those spots of shade,
Seen in the moon by dwellers there below,
That fabled talk of Cain thereby have made?"
With a slight smile: "If mortals can such fancies show,

"At least the key of sense ought thou to hold,—
That sting of arrow might not bite thee now
Admired wonders to thy sight unfold;—
If reason had not clipp'd thy wing—what thinkest thou?"

And I replied, "From this height things I see,
In different aspect and of varied shade."
And she: "Like this thy creed of false shall be
Submerged in augumentive truth, with listening's aid.

"The eight starr'd sphere has in it many lights,
That with diversity revolving shine,
Of rare, or dense, as these held in their flight,
Denote a differing power as different orbs incline.

"But one sun's virtue each is known to suit,
The more or less distributed to all;
So virtues differing, bear appropriate fruit,
Though out of one, there came leading astray, thy fall.

"Then of that dimness the true cause thou'lt know,
As by request, why different, things appear,
How in one body gross and lean both show,
And how the pages of a book seem dark or clear.

"If at the first was pierced a chasm wide,
In the eclipse, the light that still resides
Would have revealed it on the other side;
But this did not, and thus the fallacy decides.

"If this be proved, other opinions too,
In all their falsity should then appear;—
If light is hindered that it pass not through,
Some obstacle 'tis plain prevents its passage clear.

"And every beam impeded makes rebound,
As colour will when seen returned by glass,
That in the lead behind it is not found;—
Or wilt thou say refracted beams all other beams surpass,

"Take then an instance more decided still
In thy experience; showing where your arts
Have been derived, and prove as sure it will
How from one fount alone a wandering streamlet starts.

"Three mirrors take; one place beyond the rest,
And turn thy eyes the foremost not to see,
Then pass behind these, and within thy quest,
See light beneficent arising from all three.

"Reflects each mirror,—equal in its force
The light so shed: there is no need to stretch
Thy vision, reaching to the farthest source,
Convinced that splendour equal does arise from each.

"Or if the subject be the Sun's warm ray,
Melting from its first colour the cold snow
As this is laid; so mightst thou see the way
That living light has made thy trembling aspect show.

"Within the heaven of the divinest peace
Circles a body, which its virtue gives
To all that is so held in its embrace,
To each and every Orb that in its essence lives.

"All various in distinctions these abide,
Prepare them for their end, and grow their seeds;
These are the organ of the world outside,
Vanishing from thy sight; that lower yet recedes.

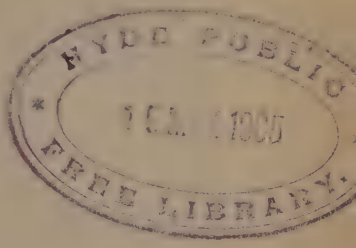
"Regard me well as thus I lead thee on
Through pathways to the place so much desired;—
I am thy guide become, thy only one,—
Where virtuous movements are alone by heaven inspired.

"As music's art beats to the spirit's touch,
Heaven that with her lights has made it fair,
Out of the thought profound had formed it such;—
Sent forth the image, sealed,—imprest it there;

"And as the soul has, hidden in your dust
To diverse members differing powers decreed,
Conformable to power, dissolve it must,
Bound into sovereign unity that multiplies star seed.

"Virtue diverse has in its laws so bound
A precious frame, that thus it might arrive
To that which as the life in you is found,—
A native light from whence the virtues you derive;

"And mingling with it in the body so,
Has by the eye its brightness there expressed;
And thus is proved that light from light must grow,—
A principle, in dense or rare, as in its bounty blest."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PARADISO

Canto III

THE ARGUMENT

Dante here has met with Picarda, the youthful Nun, his wife's sister, forcibly taken by her brother Forese and married to his friend. In her beatitude she introduces Costanza, taken likewise by force from her monastery and from wearing the Black Veil to become the wife of an Emperor, and the mother of the last heir of his family.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto III

A SUN that in its flame first warmed my heart
Could its true beauty now no longer hide,
Which proved when so revealed its sweeter part,
And in so far confessed I might the more confide.

Whilst raised my head as if to meet the light,
My vision all unused and all untrained,—
Not fitted for the unaccustomed sight
Which had in strict confession yet to be explained.

As if through glass transparent kept and cleared
Or water quiet in its silvery shine:
Not too profound within its depths revered,
Is seen a forehead's pearl in whiteness to recline.

This to my vision not the less implied:
Enough I saw to give my speech its prompt,
Whereto I always ran when error eyed,—
And as a man my thoughts were gathered at Love's font.

And as towards this immediately I fled,
All was reflected that I yet could know
Of that called love, but its reflect instead,—
Though nothing else I saw than my sweet Guide could show

In ardent fondness of her holy eyes :—
And "marvel not," she said, "if eyes like mine
Can send a smile another smile supplies,—
Though this as light to follow would the less incline.

"Or followed doubtfully where thus inclined,—
Thou whilst revolving it in thy good will,
Should know in this a nearer truth to find,
Which would to Men give new estate,—and all my words fulfil.

"Speak thou to them,—or hated or believed,
When all thy soul the light has satisfied—
And not so given their feet as to mislead,"—
I still as in the dark, with reasoning well supplied.

Like to a man impoverished by his will,—
Or a created Spirit in the ray
Of life Eternal,—of its sweet distil
I spoke without its taste where good intentions lay.

"Oh thou created Spirit in the glow
Of an eternal life whereof the sweet
Is not yet given me in its taste to know,
Or tasted would not all my comprehension meet.

"May grace be given me so I rest content,
Knowing thy name amidst this courtly throng."
Then she, with eyes as prompt in their dissent.
"Our charity must not be wasted here, much in the wrong

"If our good will give not another glow,
In like similitude with all this Court.—
I was that virgin Sister in the world below,—
By thee and others to be held in good report,

"Until my beauty was the less consealed ;—
Reconsecrated as Picarda now—
Leaving behind her others the less healed—
Who in their works though blest, later fulfilment know.

"Where their poor efforts here are more enflamed,
As of the Holy Spirit—whilst they leave
Those ordinary forms they once retained,
Where all their broken vows not less of song receive."

Then I to her, "Your marvellous aspect here
In its resplendence I can well divine
Has been transmitted as it would appear
In former feasts,—and not as losing its true sign.

"If thus relieved, say wilt thou here disown
My recognition for a longer stay?
You who had seemed so happy when alone,
Do you not languish for your friends in their delay?"

At this methought the other Shades had smiled,—
But so much pleasure could her answer give,
My ardour as at first the more declined.
"Brother," she said, "our Charity does not hereafter live

"In gifts our selfishness alone supplied;—
The others in as much if not allied,
Become distasteful—otherwise applied,—
And discord when a higher will,—than this descried.

"Well known to those within this circling sphere:—
Where Charity's necessity was brought,
And in its nature well remembered here
Whilst more conformable to that the will divine has wrought.

"So that we seem not lonely in this place,
Knowing no other than our King's own will,—
To this the rather than our own give place,
All that we knew of peace remaining with us still.

"This is the sea where all things in it move
Which were created and in Nature made.—
This light came to me in the Heaven to prove:—
For in this Paradise alone is full fruition made

"Its benefits the world not yet enjoys:—
Should this be seen a satisfying good,
There is detained for thee some other joys,
Than those so lately cherished, and retained as food.

"When further as by words and actions learned
How much an arrow takes if life assailed,—
And perfect life in Heaven is here discerned:—
Tell this thy world beneath,—to others clothed and veiled;—

Their vigils past,—that after death they sleep
In the Beloved, who their vows accepts,—
Whilst to his Charity conformed they keep.—
I went with others who the world its pride rejects.—

"He came for me another habit sent,—
With promises of Life to all his set
Men more in evil than in good intent,
Forced me from all the sweets within a cloister met.

"God knows how much my life then sent adrift:—
Its splendour in another's name is shown
On my right hand,—there see a flame relit
Amidst our other lights, much that good works had known."

This so advised had then herself revealed:—
"I was a virgin sister, and the dark veil took,
Held by a sacred bond,—nor hence concealed
Distaste for worldly pride,—all which I then forsook.

"I was that light the great Costanza flamed,—
Fan'ed to a second blaze of brilliancy—
Which brought to Sicily the last they named
The Heir as Emperor:—last in line to be."

This said, she vanished, as she sang the while
Ave Maria, less to sink in weight,—
And less might waves of memory beguile.
I who had followed my desire if might the mists abate.

For converse to Beatrice had returned;—
But she by lightning's glance had spoken more
Than by her silence;—the first time I learned
All questionings to reserve,—so much of reticence I saw.

PARADISO

Canto IV

THE ARGUMENT

Dante is annoyed to think he has incurred the displeasure of Beatrice in wishing to follow the Nun Picarda. She explains to him the impossibility of following two Guides, which gives her an opportunity for engrafting some new ideas.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto IV

BETWEEN two foods alike attractive made
The man who hesitates might hungry die,—
A lamb between two wolves would stand dismayed,
And with two deer in sight a dog let one pass by.

If I was silent give not me the blame,
Between two doubts I had distrustful grown,—
Necessity to one I gave the name—
And blame me not in this if praise I can disown.

Silent I stood, the whilst revealed desire,
Spoken by looks as words had asked of her
Some warmth to satisfy my heart's desire;—
Then like as once a monarch's wrath a Daniel could incur.

This from injustice turned would life restore:—
"Two wills," she said, "I see in anxious care
Have left thee doubtful which has fixed the law:—
As thou would'st say if good intention can good faith declare

"Why should there any gust of violence
Stint this its measure in a just reward,—
When merit can be held without offence?
Just as would Plato give to souls their star's regard.

"And as thy questioning holds thee in two wills
Less to distress thee I will first refer
To one that mostly thy distaste now fills :—
Those that the more as Seraphims the God-like nature wear,

"Moses and Samuel, say, and the Johns two,—
Much as you will, and Mary with her store,
Have not in heights of Heaven a seat more true
Than those two vanished spirits that have passed before.

"Made beautiful where seen in earlier age ;
Partaking now of sweets in different life—
Can more or less the Eternal Spirit gauge,
Knowing no difference in years where this is rife.

"Not here to see their hopes have since declined,
But marked celestials, take, in better health.
Thus would I speak to suit your lower mind,
For only those who know it feel this intellectual wealth.

"And for such reason Scripture is content
To reach your faculties by feet and hands,
Attributing to God a less intent,
Which Holy Church in human aspect better understands.

"Gabriel and Michael holding in their care,
Much as another for their honesty,—
Who even Tobias would in health repair ;—
As Timæus gave each soul star's immortality.

"Unlike to those we see are gathered here,
For these but spake agreeably to their mind ;
When to each soul as in a separate care
Was given a Star,—created for such gift assigned.

"In sentiment perhaps we see one side :—
Their voice in this as less distinctly heard,—
If so the intention we must not deride,
And honour more or less the Arc preserved,

"Though from first principles intention turned;—
A world too much to worldliness inclined
In Jove, or Mercury, or Mars had learned
To see such souls, in stars after to be enshrined.

"That other doubt which moves thee,—here is seen,
To be less harmful where it moves me not,
Nor would beseem a Guide, if showing spleen,—
Our justice here a righteous thing,—the world could blot.

"Where for an argument they take less care
Than for the Heretics their evil make.
Though this your powers might possibly repair—
Content, if my desire for truth there penetrate.

"For violence if taken by one part,
Will strengthen others only in its course;—
And no excuse for souls would this impart,—
For an unshackled will alone o'ercomes by force.

"And as the natural flame is seen in fires,
A thousand thrusts must fail this to depose;—
Seeing that follows more or less aspires,
A sign of inward force, the element that shows.

"So might the flame that once Lorenzo burned,
And gave to Muzio a dissevered hand—
If so repulsed, a clearer pathway learned
Had those who follow it, the better understand.

"But to return, this brings me very near
An argument with it could after blend;—
And not less willingly I speak of here
As an annoyance,—if hereafter greater power it send:—

"A way would bring thee where to rest thy eyes
Have not yet reached, but where thou must be led.
Though not less promptly to my thought can rise
That blessed spirit we have met, whence all deceit has fled.

"For ever to first Truth she had stood near,—
Though more of power Picarda after learned;
Which with Costanza veiled, she held as dear,—
Though contrary to theirs my way is turned.

"Hasten my brother from a peril's height,
Though to thy taste this less convenience bring.
Alcmæon held within a Father's right
Dispensed with all a mother's care on which to cling:—

"Nor lost to pity where so much destroyed.
Fly from a power a bondage brings to thought:—
Where forceful will as mischief is employed
If to the offence, excuse unequally is brought.

"In will as absolute,—escape its blame,—
Nor give consent if an immediate fall
In a retreat would bring yet more of pain.
Because Picarda in her mind dispensed with all

"In absolute negation of her will,—
So different to hers, now parts my way."
Thus could a rivulet in holy rill,
From a deep fountain draw without a let or stay

Till my desires with hers, in peace agree.—
"Oh, mistress of my heart, first love of mine,
Tell me at once,—new grafted on a tree,
How I may reach by slow degrees that height of thine.

"Whilst my affection is not too profound
To render unto thee a grace for grace;—
As those who see it feel the more profound:—
Full well I know that nothing here can take the place

"Of intellect, which verse might illustrate,—
For separate from this is nothing true;—
And possibly a union in this place
Might shed a greater lustre,—end like this in view:—

"If not, all my desire is left frustrate.
Born of a love that is in glow like mine,
Dispel my doubt, for in our natural state,
If we are drawn together so our arms entwine.

"Arrest my fears, all of my doubt dispel.
In reverence Lady, I would now demand
A truth the less obscure where now you dwell,—
Though satisfied with good, less this you understand."

Beatrice looked on me, eyes that could rain
Sparkles divine of love, that sent supplies
Conquering my virtue, to give her the reign ;—
Though lost by this the smile I saw, once in her eyes.

PARADISO

Canto V

THE ARGUMENT

Beatrice explains and delivers her charge to Dante, who dimly at first apprehending, can afterwards regard it as a work of Love bestowed on others.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto V

"IF I can show to thee the flame of Love
Which Earth in sparkles only has received,—
In greater worth is hid in Heights above,—
Thou must not marvel this more perfect light precede—

"If better sight is given to apprehend
A good that afterwards would guide thy feet,—
For well I see thy intellect can blend
With that Eternal Light, here held in seat.

"If earthly things your love below seduce
It is that a true likeness has been lost;—
But light as kindled here is more profuse—
When thou wilt know how much past services have cost

"If freedom given thee from a Law's behest."
Thus could Beatrice who this song began
Speak to a man, less apt when so addressed;—
As thus her holy talk in after verses ran:

"The greatest good that God's munificence
Could give to Man was shed from bounty here,—
As so conformed had better learnt from hence
How those, if so created, larger gifts could share.

"If first this seem too great a good as lent
For present argument,—its value learn
In fact that God can move thee to consent,
And would not show a path less entrance to discern:—

"Of life the treasure, as I can unfold,
And would to thee of all its fullness tell,
Ah how much power might this hereafter hold,
When possibly with me in family to dwell.

"Placed as within thy care, my labour hence,
With greater powers would certainly endow,—
Though holy Church might with thy care dispense
If contrariety to this thy words might show.

"Then at thy table sit awhile content:—
For food if offered now the less had served
As nourishment, and only might beguile:—
So might my thoughts hereafter better be preserved.

"For learning without memory leads astray;—
Two things are needed in a sacrifice,
Care not to cancel one, till other stay—
Kept in their essence, each in concord more to rise.

"Leave to their service those who can believe
In all the preciousness of starry worth:—
Hebrews necessities allow,—and leave
To men the many, that have found their God on Earth.

"A sacrifice than this more natural served
In better part for thee, nor found to fail.—
Materials in another form preserved,
Not on another's shoulder that the weight prevail:—

"Thus to be carried at another's will,
Drawn by a golden or a silver key.
Let those who understanding this, be still
Deemed as if foolish, when apprised of this they see

"That four for six is uncollected yet:—
Because a weightier thing has been perceived—
In value better, when the ballance met,
When quality might satisfy more than in weight received.

"Nor follow thou the mortal's empty talk;—
Faithful in this, as not half-eyed to see
A people's foolishness in way they walk,—
Nor for thy own convenience in self care to be.

"A foolishness like that high Duke's of Greece,—
Iphigenia had delighted so,
He would not listen to a voice when these
In better knowledge could her less of virtue show.

"As Christian thou, move with the greatest care
Not giving wing to every windy will:—
Believing not all waters cleansing bear:—
The Testaments are with you Old and New,—and still

"The Church's Pastor taken for a guide,
Far as might be for your salvation serve;—
But if cupidity there seem to hide,
Fear not like other men, from this to always swerve:—

"The Jews who are amongst you less in laugh.
Be not as lambs of mother's milk bereft,
Drawn not on nature in their own behalf."—
This for the manner of my writing had Beatrice left.

How distant all must seem this if I tell
To that large party, in the World of life,
Where pleasure or its semblance draws a veil
Would silence all the fondness in my genius rife.

Which might, as new, old arguments displace:—
An arrow if first struck in its design
Leaves quietly its cord, the less in chase,—
But after flies more swiftly in its rule of line.

And thus my Lady seeing I was drawn
Mainly for pleasure to her Heavenly Height;—
That other planets could the less adorn,—
A star I waited for, and found to my delight:—

Seeming to change my nature when so drawn;—
As in some quiet fish-pond duly cleared,
The fishes drawn from it the less forlorn,
On coming out, have shown on better pasturage reared.

So I in my surroundings—then could see
A thousand splendours, and the while believed
How much might love in better growth agree:—
If drawn to one another equal light received.

Which seemed as yet a shadow of much joy
Through darkness first to penetrate its bliss.
Think Reader,—older thoughts than this employ,
How great the charity,—a burden taken off like this.—

Whose anguish, thus conditioned, I can know;—
The more to others would make manifest
A blessed truth, and unto others show
Thrones of Eternal Grace,—if these at first resist

A light which shines through all the Heavenly space;—
Not too excessive when at first made known;
As light like ours it might at best efface
Till so much more of spirit into space is thrown.

This gift as from Beatrice to become
A gift from God,—seen then the more secure.
I well believe, Reader, that in thy home
Is not yet found the light,—thy eyes yet immature,

Or deemed a laughing stock, as gone astray:—
Unlike to those I saw encircled here,
Those worthy souls whose brightness of the day
Veiled from the mortal gaze, can in its rays appear.

Thus much I say directed by that light
First speaking to me,—bade me to disclose
To others, much I saw at this great height ;
Altho' as yet the sun shines not in warmth on those

Till all the colder vapour is dispelled :—
Then with more joy like mine to hide among
The holy rays that once this figure held ;—
According to this mo-de the following Cantos sung.

PARADISO

Canto VI

THE ARGUMENT

Dante in an interlude recalls the principal incidents in the Fall of the Roman Empire, and predicts the long-delayed advent of a new Cæsar.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto VI

IT might be that the Eagle in his flight
Eastward had failed the Heavenward course to find,—
Lavinia leaving there the course in sight,
Hundreds of years long past, had left behind

In the extreme of Europe,—still to cling
Close to the mountains where at first to flee,
Beneath the shadow of a sacred wing,
Another government in hand,—this had perverted me

Justice with Cæsar fled, I could retain,
That willingly in my first love believed,—
When other laws superfluous seemed and vain,
Till my attention turned, good works my care received

As Christ-like in their nature, and not more
Believing,—would in this have rest content ;—
Till a blest agency I chose before
The Pastors,—led me,—following which I went.

In much believing I have held to view,
As light that others seeing might behold
A contradiction of the false for true ;—
And this within the Church I too had softly told.

When God inspired, his peace and mercy given,
For so much cleansing I resigned my dower.
If his right hand the Army's Chief had given,
It was sure sign,—to him, I had resigned the power.

Though first my questionings brought me a reply,
As in desire with other choice to close;—
For know'st thou not, this said, a reason why
Beneath a sacred sign, so many might oppose.

See virtue claiming most his reverence
Pallanti die for the dear kingdom's breath;
Alone in Alba left as his defence,—
Detained there thirty years or more, when slowed to death

Three against Three they punish and detain.
Dost thou not know the Sabines' shame and grief
Lavinia left them,—in the second reign
Surrounding neighbours, after joys bereave.

Where so much error on the Roman's part,—
Opposing it saw Brenno and Perro
From older College principles depart;
Torquato, Quinto, others more than these, we knew

The less by name: and Deci and Fabi,
Not willingly their fame to these denied:—
Which shook the Arabian's pride, the track could see
Where Hannibal his Alpine stream had left behind.

Whereof thou too wouldst drink,—the triumph wear
As a young man, of Pompey, Scipio;—
And others that thy lesser love could share,
Less native to thy parts;—yet time will show

A way:—as Heavenly Will alone might claim,—
The world restored,—Rome's Cæsar took away.—
The Vano as the Reno after name;—
Isura as the Era, not in parting stray.

And Senna;—with all those Rhone's vallies bring:—
As at Ravenna joining, forth to reach,—
Salute the Rubicon, and cross its spring,
Its course no further trace in pen or speech:—

A troop towards Spain returned for their relief;—
Durazzo, and Pharsalia fleeing hence,
The hot Nile made to feel their fall in grief;
Antandos, Simoenta, softly moving hence

Be seen where Ettore has made its fall,
And Ptolemy's great cost had to restore:—
Then thundering flee to Juba, thence to call
Into the East all those the Pompian trump could draw.

See those the followers of a trumpet's blair,—
Brutus and Cassio to the Inferno sink;—
Modena and Perugio left to care;—
Of sorrow-laden Cleopatra not less think:—

Of her, in death, welcomed the poison snake;—
Or him who ran to the red shore to die;—
Thinking to find a world in peace to take,
Saw in Giano's Temple closed, illusion fly.

Those only as in sign can read my speech,
Must follow this before a fact is known,—
And mortals' kingdom my suggestion reach;—
The less obscure become, when a third Cæsar shown.

In purer love where eyes might see more clear
The living justice that my words set forth.—
Conceding to the Hand I speak of here,
The glory that he takes in vengeance of his wrath.

And those admiring him would hence repeat;—
As vengeance possibly made this to serve
Like Titus, who an ancient sin would meet:—
Seen in the Lombard's tooth;—if Holy Church but swerve

With Carlo Magnus hid beneath its wing
Fly to avenge the wrong, and this sustain.
Nor would I judge those over you who bring
The faults that I deplore as evils in its train.

Where some assigned the white of Lillies' flower,
And others take a more appropriate part:—
If failure gives the other more of power,
As Ghibbolins,—to side, from others stand apart.

Where evil follows, not by justice led;—
Holden together for mere parties' sake;
Whilst a new Charles they follow as their head,
In fear some newer code their liberties might take.

More like to children, father's rod impeld,
Than as God's lillies in his army show;—
Whilst those a tiny star at first beheld
In the good Spirit's leading, praise and honnor know

And higher their desires would yet ascend,
If less divided they can pierce the ray
Of that true love the Heavens on man can send;—
But measure not a pledge by length of its delay.

Nor meeted out as part of this our joy,—
Seen in fruition of it less or more
In adolescence that just lives enjoy:—
In our affection not receiving its full store.

Where diverse voices make but one sweet note;
Because of differences that in our life
To harmony's rotation are devote;
Within a present pearl a light like Romeo's ripe.

His works of beauty less to be admired
Where the Provencals in an evil day
Less on him smiled,—and from them he retired,
So much intended for their good taken another way.

Four daughters, and each made to be a queen,
Had Raymond Berenger,—if asked askance,
Why a just man [1] a Roman pilgrim seen—
A mendicant, that made their fortunes to advance.

Why was assigned him seven and five by ten,
When poor and aged to take of the world's store
The bit by bit they gave his life;—seen when
Those who had known his heart praised;—to be praised the more.

[1] "It came to pass through envy which destroys all good, that the Barons of Provence accused the good Romeo that he had managed the Count's treasure ill, and they called upon him to give an account; the worthy Romeo said: 'Count, I have served thee long-while, and raised thy estate from small to great, and for this, through the false council of thy people thou art little grateful. I came to thy court a poor pilgrim and I have lived virtuously here; give me back my mule, my staff, and my scrip, as I came here, and I renounce thy service.' The Count would not that he should depart, but for nought that he could do would he remain; and as he came so he departed, and no one knew whence he came or whither he went. But many held that he was a sainted soul."
—Villani's *Florentine Chronicles*.

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PARADISO

Canto VII

THE ARGUMENT

Beatrice continuing her ascent with Dante towards the Sun, discourses with him on the Fall of Man, and his resurrection.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto VII

SALVATION, Glory of the God most high;
In thy blest fire the nation's light renew:
As upward from their music notes we fly,
The orbs beneath like sparks receded from our view.

Facing the light, and past their dance remote:—
"Speak to me, speak, as was thy wont,"—but stopt
In reverential awe my doubtful note,
As in her name the B. and I. C. E. was dropt[1]

In homage that she drew;—always possessed.—
She, with some shade of suffering, seemed less pleased,
But answered to this tone of mine distressed,
With smile, as once her happy name the fire had eased:

"Assenting to my council as was fit,
Within thy consciousness a doubt I read,
Lest vengeance might not punishment remit,
Nor justice from just penalty of sin recede.

"But I will solve so much within thy thought,
As thou whilst listening to my theme shalt own,
To thy presentment greater sense is brought;—
Than one man's unborn progeny, past punishment disown;

[1] The familiar name given to Beatrice.

"Or virtue should allow curbed side by side:—
So that the human race has weakly grown,
In that great error ages to abide,
Till in man's nature should the Word of God in peace be sown.

"Unseated once, now with his Maker blent
In the high sun of His eternal love;—
As lifts thy vision whence His rays are sent,
Know that the creature good, sincere made from above,

"In first creation, had abandoned brief
His Paradise, wherein he turned astray
Out of the path of truth, which was his life,—
A punishment that on the Cross was seen to lay,

"That nature might thereby have recompence.—
Not so: nor was that person justly killed,
Regarding him who suffered, and from whence
So much unlike that nature was in him revealed.

"Nor might a deed so diverse have been given
As made both Jews, and God, pleased with a death,
That made the earth to shake, and opened Heaven:—
Nor would the bond more binding be, because thou saith,

"A court of justice might such vengeance mete;—
But I perceive how thy contracted mind,
Thought within thought, has made the knot complete
Which thou with great desire expected to unbind.

"Thou sayst, 'I well discern the thing I hate,—
But because God so willed, He hid it from me
How our redemption could be in such state,'—
And the decree, my brother, hidden from all must be

"Who in the flame of Love have not yet earned
Their growth of genius;—verily, a sign
So many marvelled at, and few discerned,
I tell thee was because the mode was more benign.

"Goodness supreme would of itself destroy
In its own burning brightness every ill,
Which its eternal beauty would alloy,
Or that from out another medium might distil;—

"Having no end, because unmoved in word
From His own image, that Himself had sealed;
Without a medium, in abundance poured,
Liberal to all, not subject to a newer thing revealed.

"The more conformable, the more at peace;
As holy ardour from each ray emits
Similitude; and with it Life's increase
To that nobility, which though it fell, it still befits.

"By sin alone disfranchised in the fall,
And made dissimilar to highest good;—
A dignity so lost beyond recall,
Because the lesser light in him had been withstood.

"Nor could the man recover from his blow
In the just punishment of self-delight;
Your nature by that total overthrow
Lost, as his seed, your Paradise by right.

"Nor though thou covet, cannot reinstate
A lost inheritance, nor pass the guard:—
Or God had in His kindness kept the gate,
Or the Man's folly, of himself, had satisfied award.

"Fix now thy eyes on the profound abyss
Of the Eternal council, as thy sight
My words far reaching, yet may follow this:
Where none but humble and obedient souls can pierce the light,

"Whilst disobedience still holds on its way;
And for this reason that the victim gave
The larger satisfaction:—and now say
If God contracted with his life, lost life to save

"Was it his own, or both his view was toward?
But as the work was more esteemed by those
Than other works they held;—had in regard
To goodness of the heart, from out of which they rose

"The world, Divine Benevolence had sent,
Proceeding forth and out of His own ray,
With fragments from above remained content:—
Nor was there between latest night and the first day

"Such glorious procession in the height,
As chased, one saw the other vanquished fly;—
When God, in the full presence of His might
Gives unto man a strength to mount towards Him more nigh,

"Whence by his action sole he made his fall:—
And failed all modes that justice might require,
If God's incarnate Son, humble withal,
By His great works had not so satisfied desire;

"And having thus disclosed Him passed from there:—
For in His presence, as He is, am I.—
Thou say'st, I see the fire, the water, air,
Earth, and the vaporous mists that rise thereby;

"These from corruption come, and short their stay,
For this throughout creation was ordained,
That things so given be not cast away,
But through corruption, in security retained.

"The angels, Brother, and this clearer heaven
Wherein thou art, tells of creative force
Remaining, and in its perfection given,
Whilst all the elements so named run in their course—

"Till the creation's truths may be disclosed
Within that star they turned to vanity;—
Created, was the matter which they hold;—
Created, the true knowledge that informs thereby.

"The animals diverse, and plants that grow
Towards their completion, powerfully draw
The rays of sacred light that move them so;
But this, *our life*, was made no middle flight to soar

"To heights benignant, as beloved the best;
In God's desire fulfilled the most of all;—
So might the resurrection be expressed,
And flesh restored, in which our parents made their fall."

PARADISO

Canto VIII

THE ARGUMENT

A long interview ensues with Charles Martel, the King of Hungary, surnamed the Sledge-Hammer, for his high-handed manner of rebuking the powers of Evil. This exhorts Dante to follow in his zeal with more of grace and in less of doubt. Dante urges his incompetency for such an undertaking.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto VIII

THE World had worshiped in its darkened phase
The fair Cyprean Godess for its love,
When folly had disused the former rays,—
Led by a third and tiny circle which they saw above.

Nor less of honour to the others gave
In sacrifices and in votive cry ;—
As ancient people ancient customs crave :—
See Dione and Cupid there,—their mother seated by,

As talking on the knees of Dido sit ;—
And all of those like principles can hold
In old vocabularies, which made fit
As by the Sun,—the Stars to shine in copper or in gold.

Not in their course my upward flight would tend :—
But faithful to my Lady higher drawn,
In her I saw such radiance after blend
More than from all of other forms on me had shone.

The whilst I saw a greater splendour shine,
Moving in circle,—I could well discern
How those shut out might but to laugh incline
When of their life Eternal some new mode they learn.

A colder wind will not the cloud dilate,—
If visible or not is held within
All unapparent,—and those rest and wait
Who in the Hereafter have their life to win.

Nearest they come who having left the track
First sighted of the higher Seraphim—
Have after heard so much resounded back
Hosanna,—that the smile was not alone for them.

Which blends in one those who are nearest us :—
Solely by us are known, whilst others take
Their pleasures out of joys we here discuss,—
Not yet as Princes, at our feast in full partake :—

As one in Circle's turn,—and one in set ;—
You that a World detains, as I am here,
Knowing already of a World reset—
Have found in larger love, of rest a greater store.

Perhaps my eyes were held more partially
In reverence where my Lady thus would dwell—
When great contentment gave me certainty,
Revolving in a light which promised me so well ;

And in possession, other gods let fly,
Heard as a voice some great affection bore,—
As those who seeing meet it eye to eye,—
Following some newer joy in an abounding store.

Of that I speak,—whilst following I could see
The World apparent as the less in time ;—
If less esteemed for its futurity
Filled with the unknown evils that I would resign.

A joy the less revealed to those less eased,
Who the surrounding beams have not yet warmed
The animal in thirst not yet appeased ;—
If less believed,—not less of after good informed

If such their state, to them I would explain
How I have grown yet on another bent ;—
As washed and left ashore, as might detain
The Rhone, the leaves,—till with the Sargo blent

And in the Ausonia's Corner,—till embowered
The Gaeta, Bari, and Crotono far
The Tronto and the Verdi see enflowered
As passing by they front the Highlands seen afar

In streams that from a mightier Danube flow—
Till torn Tedeschia, much abandoned there
In beautiful Trinacria falls below,—
Between Pachino and Pelerus in a gulf's repair

Which larger European ships might serve—
Not led by Typhæus as a sulphrous stream,
But lent to seem an ancorage in reserve—
Till might a better Charles or Rudolph reign supreme

Where the bad Lords, the people had misled ;—
And signaled from Palermo, are apprized
Of death,—or death to be if so are led.
Against all this my Brethren you are yet advised.

Your poverty—in Catalonia gain ;—
If hither led would give you less offence
When so provisioned—nor the less maintain
Care for the cargos that are shipp't from thence

To larger parts ; like him who in his need
Robbed the Militia,—and of whom 'twas said
He took no care of his own Coffer's feed.
" Because," this said, " some higher joy for thee is made."

So much my Lord in speech informing me ;—
" Let good beginning end not in desire
Like thee I watch,—alike a watchman see
The more in grace, if after thee I may not tire.

"Remembering how in God my light and joy
Held is his care,—by doubt is less misled ;—
Where much of bitter given with sweet's alloy."
Thus could he speak to me and after that he said :

"If in my power I show to thee the track—
At thy demand as wish I seem to know—
Thy face set be, as it I pushed thy back
To reach the good that reigns,—whereafter thou wouldst go.

"And towards that height where Virtue may reside
Which makes provision for a larger health—
Beyond the thoughts of nature could provide :—
If so enlarged would bring to thee a larger health.

"Whilst others drawn, would have their health as thine—
And show—within an Arc, if seated there
Their inclination towards it must incline—
Within an Arc to watch the arrow held in care.

"If that not so, would Heaven within thy walk
Provide thee nothing of its good effect.
Towards those who take thy facts as empty talk,
Be, as if not to be,—where intellect is wrecked.

"Moved from beneath a star's unconscious move
Neglect the first, for a more perfect lead :—
Say, couldst thou wish this mere delusion prove ?"
"Not yet," I said, "altho' impossible in tread.

"Where nature has its weariness attained."
Then he as listening spake to me again :—
"How couldst thou stand on Earth and see unpained
The men so much in want, and not their needs sustain ?"

"Just so," I said, "not by my choice or will :—
Moreover, why should I with others live
Diversely, if diversity might kill,
And a good master's service they would not receive ?"

"A possible conclusion if reverse
Effects here possible to root had been ;—
Not so was Solon born, or so diverse
Those that of old amidst them once Melchisedec had seen.

"And others, from an Arc that saw let fly
The arrow that had failed to reach its mark.—
Let all through nature thy suggestions fly—
If waiting mortals, but desire a work of art—

"Not yet distinguished from their house of call ;—
As much of difference seen in Esau's seed
And Jacobs ;—where Quirinus within call
They found so vile, they sent for Mars, his birth to mend.

"Nature can generate so much in man
Retained from age to age, assigned to be
Alike, had not the Will Divine in plan
Behind a present form held purposed destiny.

"And this make known to them, a joy I give
As a heart token—now I leave with thee :—
For all forlorn without would nature live
In discord with itself,—born of another tree.

"Out of right reign, but disagreement prove ;—
And if the world still lags behind the thought
Of its foundation,—there is much to love,
Following it with the good to be hereafter brought.

"You that would force in a religious tone,
So much a spade that furrows but the sand.—
My sermon for your laughter only shown ;—
That track of yours can but detain out of the high land."

PARADISO

Canto IX

THE ARGUMENT

After this discourse with Charles Martel, his daughter the Queen of Louis the tenth of France, appears, and assures Dante that justice will compensate for the former troubles brought through her on the land.

After this appears the Bishop of Feltro, an early convert to the new opinions, and formerly held in great esteem, and of much influence, who, after receiving the fugitives from one of their cities in opposition to the Pope, was induced, by promises of his protection, to give them back, when the most part of these Seignors were cruelly put to death.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto IX

AFTER my Charles there came his Daughter fair
Who of her courtesy would solve my doubt,
Seeing that by mistake was lost the care
Else a good seed had scattered all the earth about.

"Stay for awhile," this said, "till years roll past
Of which I may not speak, posterity
Will give you back true justice at the last,
In measure of the blame derived through me."

And when this life, filled with a holy light
Had passed into the Sun which thus could fill,—
Was by good will detained, still held in sight
So much that touched with good, could of its warmth instil.

Alas, for souls ingenuous, lost to will;—
Bewitched and satisfied the hearts of you
Turned towards a Temple's charms,—yet one day will
You too behold a splendour, more than this endue.

Then towards me came with looks that testified
More pleasure than is seen to those abroad;—
Beatrice seeming less dissatisfied,
Lifting the eyes which with my first desires could less accord:—

That to my wish some compensation brought;—
"Blest spirit," then I said, "give me more proof,
I may reflect as thine, the same my thought."
Then from her came new light in following my behoof,

Which brought me from the depths that seemed yet new,—
As coming to me out of the profound;—
Of which she best could sing who of it knew.
And following these her words a greater joy I found.

"In a low part of Italy despised,
Which lies between Rialto and the source
Of Brenta and Piava, there see rise
A little hill, scarce higher than a wavelet in its course.

"Whence formerly arose a tapering flame,—
Where some assault had a great severance wrought,—
There was I born, held in its root my name,
Cunizza called, and overcome by light its power had brought.

"This for my better joy excuse discern;—
If such my fate, my blame no longer see;
Perhaps too strong a light for those who turn
Their vulgar gaze on that which lessens a decree.

"In higher light and deepened joy to meet
Those in our Heaven that in our flame had moved:—
After five hundred years,—released, can greet
Those from the flame they earned, no more removed.

"See how to man more excellence is given,
In higher light when this is so exchanged,—
And think not of a present crowd who driven
The Tagliamento and the Adice have so much estranged.

"Fast flies the time Padova's march is found
To change those waters that at Venice blent,—
Drawn by the dictate of the meaner crowd,—
Sile and Cognon joined in a supreme content.

"As snatched from all held in a former reign,—
Weeping for Feltro, hindered in default
Of Empire, by its Pastor, lost to gain,
Blocked at an entrance, such as Malta's, for asault.

"Where found—the larger ships might shield the land,—
The Natives from a foreign shore detain
Who of their courtesy bring coin in hand,—
Ensuring peace thereby the longer they remain.

"So far I speak, as through a glass of thrones
Seen a reflection of our God's own light,—
If nothing dis-associate it owns—
Of that I speak of here the good not held from sight;"

Then into silence fell this, in the track
Of larger joys,—of other joys to note;—
As on a parted vista to look back
Upon a splendour that had seemed too far remote.

Whilst I a newer joy from this acquired,
Which left a smile, as a departure had
When daylight to its evening has declined,—
Sending a shadow, lest the parting seem too sad.

"And God foreseeing all, leaves thee this smile."
"Blest Spirit," I rejoined, "if so much bliss
Impels thy flight, I would not stay the while,
If Heaven retains a voice perfect in tone as this,

"Seeming to touch thy song with wings of fire;—
Why should its flight be made to fan the air,
Nor stay to satisfy my heart's desire."
"If not at thy demand," this said, "we yet communion share."

"In larger valley that the waters spand"—
Then by himself I heard another speak;—
"Where the surrounding seas ingirt the land
As if in discord,—from with the sun, to further keep,

"And a meridean this had wished to make,
In its horizon would resume its sway.
Within such valley I could learning take,
When Ebro had with Marcra found a shorter way.

"To part the Genovese from Tuscony;—
On one occasion from its garden side
Had bulged a seat thereafter made to fly
Into a port of entrance as a blood red furnace dyed.

"Falco, the people called me where my name
Became of note, and inasmuch as Heaven
Had there imprinted, like it I became;—
And not more ready to the flames was Belus' daughter given

"When much annoying Sichœus and Creusa,
Than I, until my hair convenience claimed;
Nor she that Rhodope deluded, saw
From Demophoon, that Toli's heart inflamed.

"Not as repenting this, but as if laugh,
And not a blow had turned aside my thought,
Still to retain ordained provision's staff,
Where arts not valued less their great adornment brought.

"In much affection held by me as good,
Long as the world beneath to these had turned:
Why held so fast when better understood
Within this higher sphere, I have not yet discerned.

"But thou wilt know, arrived at greater height,—
Reviewed by me as if some glittering star,
Giving reflection made the water bright,
As glympse of sunlight falling from the rays afar.

"Know too, how entrance to this tranquil state,
Has Rhab met, within her place too, found
A higher grade than she had made relate;
Conjoined in ordinance with us her seat has owned:—

"Out of this Heaven as merest shade appeared ;—
Who to your world beneath had given her love,—
Well representing those the Palm upreared,
In other triumph borne,—till Christ was raised above :—

"The first in favour when his glory seen ;—
Whilst Joshua's movements in the Holy Land
Have little left for memory's esteem,—
In likeness of his City ;—reft his fostering hand.

"Seen first in culture as its Maker's mould ;—
The envy then of every other flower,—
Producing all that meaner plants withhold ;
Until the harmful Wolf with his destroying power

"Made what Evangelists and Doctors taught
Seem as a discord in derision told ;—
And Students in their Marginal reference brought,
The known intentions Pope and Cardinals withhold.

"Not with the Nazarine their thoughts agree
Gabriel o'ershadowed ;—in a part's decree,
As Rome and Vatican,—their cemetery,
The followers of Peter laid : adulteration free."

PARADISO

Canto X

THE ARGUMENT

Dante apostrophises the Sun as a reflection of the Creator: ascending to its height, he sees there in agreement "The Family of Four." Afterwards, from a secret path, Thomas Aquinias appears, and salutes him, introducing several noted Worthies, Saints, Martyrs, and Forerunners of the Truth.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto X

WHERE looks into his Son with so much love
As each towards each must evermore inspire
The Will Ineffable,—that so can move
Our intellect, once seen—we fail not to admire

An ordinance upheld within such might,
Without it nought :—Reader, now lift thy eyes,
Enter with me that all supporting light
Whence moved direct from Him all other movements rise

And thus begun, see what from it proceeds,—
Admiring watch the powerful Master's art ;—
So much of love within it there concedes,
As from it never more His loving eye can part.

In all of the surroundings then to see
The form that from it circling planets bear ;—
Which locks the worlds within its powerful key,
And gives to all in separate paths,—unchanged in care

So much of virtue as from Heaven is own ;—
Whilst any other power brings death thereby,
If more or less be drawn, for left alone
Must fall a world displaced from ordinance so high.

Reader, now rest thee, and beside thy seat
Fatigued at first, refreshed, thy thoughts enjoy;
If food I set before thee is thy meat,
The writing held within my care finds good employ.

That minister of Nature's might whose power
The majesty of Heaven can so imprint
With its own light, measures out every hour,
And various parts beneath remembers without stint.

First joined to this, the breath Divine still there;—
And I was with him, but of that descent
No record make, Mankind may not declare
As known,—how first in the great thought from Him he went.

Oh, my Beatrice, who is this so led
Into the midst of good thus suddenly
To a great height, where time may not be read,
When so much shall agree with light's intensity!

That this within the Sun should entrance gain,
Not by a colour, but by light perceived,
That genius might with skill and use make plain
Imaginations,—if by words not then received

Believed as possible, when so desired;—
And if our fancy should need some such base
At this great height, no marvel if required
When from the Sun itself our eyes withdraw their gaze.

Within I saw the Four in family
Of the great Father who His children knows—
And in whose spirit they can all agree.
Beatrice then:—"Thank thou the Angel's sun that this it shows;—

"And thank the grace that raised thee to this height;—
The heart of man may not perhaps digest
At first so much devotion, and will slight
All God's good pleasure that my words to thee have blessed."

And in that word, since mine, such love is placed
That even Beatrice is eclypséd beside :—
Nor she displeased, whose smile was not effaced
Because reflection from her eyes could things divide.

I saw a vivid brightness shining round
About our centre, and a voice more sweet
Than in this record ;—where the sun was crowned
And cinctured like Latona's daughter, though less fleet,—

Which the impregnate air would not let fall,
But in its woof retained, and made its zone.
Within these courts of Heaven I can recall
Many the jewels rich and rare, no power could hence discrown.

And with their song the light I saw was filled ;—
If unplumed fledgelings fail to mount so high,
The novel movement must remain unskilled.
As with like melodies their sun led steps came nigh

They circled round us thrice, as stars the pole ;—
Till suddenly arrested in their dance,
Waiting to catch the newer notes that roll :—
And then resumed, in quickened movements, their advance.

From out a hidden pathway came a sound :—
"When true love that such rays of light can send,
Grows to its height, and is in essence found,—
With so much added lustre shalt thou then ascend

"The ladder, none dismount it, but retake ;—
When wine drawn from its bottle can bestow
Not license from a hole thy thirst to slake ;—
Or as is water to the sea, lost in its flow.

"Then thou shouldst knowledge have of plants that flower
A garland that a lady loved could wear,
Who into Heaven has brought thee by her power :—
A lamb amongst the Holy flock Dominic care

"Led to full pasturage,—not their vanity.
This on my right, seeming to me most nigh,
Brother and Master was, for this is he
Named Albert of Cologne;—Thomas Aquinias I.

"Of others, if thou wouldst have certainty,
By these my words directed, turn thy eyes
To those with blessed garlands that we see:—
This one is Grazian;—this from whom the shining sparkles
rise,

"Who aided much the Forum then and there,
And brought us pleasure into Paradise,—
Adornment of our Courts;—the other near,
Peter, who gave to Holy Church his poverty the price.

"A Fifth that shines amongst us with a glow
Caught from love's breath, admired the world around,
Has here no claim of novelty to show.
Within the entrance higher light, and more profound,

"Wisdom's own Messenger, Truth's verity,—
Whence none can rise a second in estate.
And lower down,—as taper's light then see
How Angel's nature in the Flesh can ministrate.

"With glimmering light to smile see there abide
An advocate of Christian temples, such
Augustine,—who the Latin well supplied.
And if thy vision follow it beyond, so much

"In Light of lights,—moved far above my praise,
Those that an octave to the set remain;—
Above us far, where in delight there stays
A holy soul, the worlds deceit and hate had made more plain.

"The Flesh they once had hunted down they laid
In Ceil d'oro, and with Martyr's prize,
And exile, this his place of Peace was made.
In other flames of glistening light see ardours rise

"Of Isidoro, Bede, and Riccardo;—
In more esteem than men could estimate
As such;—then turned to me again, see glow
A spirit wrapt in thought who deemed death came too late.

"And see the eternal light of Sigebert,
An arguer for Truth in lanes and courts—
The Truth though vilified would still assert:—
Hence strikes the hour to rise,—God's spouse deports

"To matina the Bridegroom in his love:
The tin-tin of the bell that gathers round,
In urgency of a sweet note to move
The loving hearts, and well disposed,—to swell the sound."

Thus moved in glorious circle, saw I those
Whose answering voices kept in time, with tone
Of greater sweetness than to notes it owes:—
Only within an entrance there such joy is known.

PARADISO

Canto XI

THE ARGUMENT

Saint Thomas here continues his discourse, relating to Dante the Life and Experience of Saint Francis of Assisi, with the rise of his monastic Order, and its subsequent decline.

PARADISO

Canto XI

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XI

O H! what a senseless cure do mortals show,—
In faulty syllogism those betray,—
As makes thee beat thy wings so far below,
With maxims hid behind an oath none dare gainsay :—

Without a leave takes sacerdotal throne,
And reigns by force, and merest sophistries ;—
As court of Justice all its thefts disown,
To wrap that idly up, its carnal will supplies.

Though of such folly I was made aware
Ere I was lifted into Paradise,—
Now held within Beatrice's valued care
The light the candle gave a fuller flame supplies.

And I who felt within the glow of light,
That in a first communion seemed to smile,
Began to feel more of a grave delight,
As in the rays of Heaven this spake to me the while :—

"If as a revelation from above,
Was born thy thought, a reason for it learn :—
If still in doubt, that doubt I would remove,
In that I spake of darkly, reason to discern :

"Wherein I gave a hint of pasturage good;—
And none from one, a second can arise
Distinguished from the rest as first it stood.
A Providence that governs in the World All Wise

"Knows every aspect in creative light,—
As yet to come and hid beneath the flood,
Whence there then meets Him in his own delight
The spouse that in high call gave Him her precious blood.

"Secure henceforth and faithful to his side
Two Principals ordained in favour high
Were here and there admitted as a guide:—
This one as all Seraphic, seen in ardour fly;—

"The other in his flight brought to the Earth
A wisdom's splendour of the Cherub's glow:—
Of one I speak,—though most to me in worth
For work he did, preferred, one here whose name I show.

"Between Turbino, and the watery course
Fruitful Ubaldis' chosen hillside holds,—
Which owes fertility to mountain source,
And whence Perugia takes its changeful heats and colds

"Through the suns portal;—where behind it weeps
On mountain's top Nocera with Gualdo.—
And on that side where most the sunshine keeps,
Was born into the world another sun to glow

"Than from the Ganges waves is seen to rise.—
Though in this place they name it by the word
Ascesi,—that too short for it in size,
As the wide Oriente, better named in this record.

"Nor in a fitter birthplace could be blest;—
Where first the sun shines in a morning glow,
That gives to Earth its comfort of the best.—
In youth this one,—a Father thought had fixed his love too
low;—

"Who not in race for death his courser led:—
And yet a lady loved with all his soul;—
Before the Spiritual Court this one he wed,—
Et coram patre loved not less,—perhaps in more controul.

"She a lone widow that bereaved of spouse,
More than a thousand years unsought must stay;—
Scarce less bereft than Mary of her House,
When from the Cross she saw them bear her Christ away.

"Nor longer as expectant thou remain;—
This was Francesco,—Poverty his Bride;
And their love story I could thus detain,
That in such sweet accord a semblance I might hide

"In marvellous love and tenderest regard
A grave excuse for holiness of thought;—
Where once the saintly, venerable Bernard
Barefooted and behind at first,—the rest had caught.

"Oh senseless riches, and oh blessed truth!
Egidio and Silvestro bare foot came,
Behind the party,—sharing peace forsooth
Soon as they saw their master wedded to the same.

"As one in family;—begirt like these,—
Not less of generous heart in mean attire,—
Came Peter Bernadone to share their peace,
A less peculiar garb than theirs not to desire.

"But in a regal thought of hard intent,
Was Innocent the first to seal their sign;—
That peoples poverty might bring content
In prospect of more glorious cheer in Heaven's assign.

"The second an inheritance to claim
As of the Eternal will was Honoro;—
And hence came Martyrdom to those Christ's name
Had preached to Soldan, the superb, in following low:—

"Whence finding such persuasion did not suit,—
A people not to be converted so,—
Returned to their Italian herbs and fruit;—
On the bare rock betwixt Tiber and Arno's flow

"Take as the marks of Christ their latest seal;—
As for two years this on his members bore
When in a good departure of much zeal,
Pleased with the hempen cord,—that soiled, his Brethren wore

"In recompense of weak and stubborn will;—
Those that he left,—believed to be as just,—
Enjoined that they his lady's care fulfil,—
His best beloved,—nor turned from her, be faithless to their trust.

"And when the soul that was so excellent,
Passed from their sight to a new kingdom's sphere,—
Desiring this last voyage that he went,
No other bark than Peter's, for his latest bier,—

"Thought he had left his college its ensign:—
This was the one we called our Patriarch,
And following his behests in that design
Might well perceive the good held in a casket dark.

"But his peculiar habit of new life
They turned to greediness, without its power,—
Wherein diversity of health was rife
Which in their sins became to them their latest dower:—

"As wandering beggars, less in sanctity
Turned from the sheep fold of their Latin vow;—
Far better if as witnesses to see
The gifts their Pastors own,—nor such as those allow,

"Whose cap serves little else than bread to hold.
Now if my words may not have been uncaught,
And to an audience I could thus unfold
All that is given me here as a returning thought:—

"Thy doubts may partly in contentment stay—
And having seen the plant that could attire
Such splinter,—meet the argument and say,
That was good pasturage,—not of vanity's desire."

PARADISO

Canto XII

THE ARGUMENT

This last is succeeded by another, Buonventura, General of the Franciscan Order, credited to have effected there some reforms, and esteemed one of the most profound divines of his age. This laments over the fall from grace of the learned Saint Dominico, Head of the Order of Black Friars, who is said by some to have been the instigator of the Inquisition. This he likens to a head gardener in the Lord's garden, Catholic, once watered by native streams, since deterred, the Vine being now artifically cultured.

The insig
to a band gardener in the
watered by matiy streams.
now artificially cultured.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XII

SOON as this blessed flame of speech relieved,
As if some holy drum had ceased its beat,
Another more approaching I perceived,
Come from his circle, nor in haste to take his seat.

And this to follow in a like recall,
In note by note and Canto as our muse,
Our Siren, heard more sweet in trumpet's call,
Than had its note of splendour, meeting first refuse.

Which chased from me a cloud held in the dark,
As Juno's handmaid law abiding, cleared,
A doorway that has since upheld an Arc;—
Consuming, so to speak the vapours love had reared.

To Noah was given and sent as an insight,
That God from out of Heaven therein had placed
The ensign of his love, in great delight,
Engirded with his rose, brought with him in his haste.

And doubly girding intimate reply,
Anticipatory of high festival
In song and dance, this to be made more nigh,
Mingling beneath a glorious light, the one and all.

As then my eyes to a new pleasure turned,
By reason of my choice uplifted now,
I heard a voice to heart's delight returned,
Soft in its cadence, and as compass needle slow.

Approaching slowly as in duty bound,
Thus to commence: "Love that could beautify
Gives me just cause to speak of that I found,
As scintillating spark compared with light on High.

"Worthy is he who here and there induced
Those first in military glory shown,
To join a higher light such as infused
Christ's Army, held behind him in his care alone.

"Thus as restrained await his proffered sign
Whilst closely prest they slowly move along
Led by their chief unless he might resign
Who solely by his grace had made to feel as strong.

"If worthilly his cause they might sustain—
As two in company would reinstate
A disunited people and regain
A cleavage which so portioned made two less relate—

"Where the soft zephyrs the young leaf could fan,
And Europe in new revelation see
Not yet far off, where billows chide began
In check of verdure, afterwards the sun set free.

"As by a Fury, set apart in fail,
A fortunate Callaroga to sit
Beneath the ladder hidden by a veil
As Lion subject yet supreme, this might befit

"That seen behind a loving mistress born—
In Christian faith, as holy athlete rise
Benignant to his own,—his foes foresworn,—
It so created fail as living virtue's prize.

"Where nothing from his mother he might take;—
Begotten in so much of virtuous life
Of this bereft of profit—for his sake—
Though equal sponsorship remained—and just as rife.

"Whilst to a sacred font this son was held—
Each giving parentage in equal health;—
The lady in consent the whilst beheld,
Only in dream, the fruit of so much after wealth.

"This so begotten was as Heir received:—
But as perhaps too much might be construed,—
They made his spirit of the flesh relieved;—
So might a great possession better be reviewed.

"Dominico they named him, of him less
I speak as gardener, than the garden raised
By Christ, who in first love of his address
Made him chief councillor—his good work appraised

"Till slugish grown—this silent, would dismiss
Much that to Earth was given in nourishment:—
As if he said, 'my fate is not like this!'
Oh, happy father—had thy name felicity but meant!

"And blest the mother in Giovanna's name,—
If so interpreted meant grace as well!
Not troubled in the world till after came
Ostense, and Taddeo;—big with learning's swell,

"Where less on manna of true love they fed;—
This as great Doctor afterwards be found
To put his healing art so much instead
Of nature, to the vine,—he robbed the owners ground.—

"And sat beneath it, as without a care
For the just poor,—only to suit himself.—
The branches of the vine so to ensnare
That two or three for six be given in pelf.

"The first of vacant seats to hand away ;—
Non decimas quæ sunt pauperum ;—
And ask of those so held beneath his sway
Leave to conduct the vine, as might its seeds become :

"And make of this the four and twenty fold
Alike in doctrine and alike in will,
An officered apostleship to hold ;—
As in some mighty torrent the high lands to fill

"The streams erratical hereafter turn—
More lively and impetuous—if they went
By some impediment in less return ;—
Diverted from the shores its fulness first was sent :—

"The garden Catholics refreshments found,—
Embowered in branches of a better life
Than by a dung cart visiting the ground ;—
More to defend the holy Church, within its camp, from strife ;

"The people outside better understand
That here and there some excellence they view ;—
As Thomas coming firstly to my hand,
Had of his courtesy withheld them from my view.

"But a wheelbarrow's lone circumference
With so much stench the miry ground encased,—
His family who took their walks, could thence
And presently discern the marks their feet disgraced.

"And speedily would turn another way,
Finding so much disculture all around—
And that the nuisance would yet further stray,—
Resolved regretfully, the arc must leave the ground.

"I well may say it,—those who could compare,
And carefully in page by page make known
Our volume, found in plainness written there
I am,—in that I am,—to sit upon the throne.

"Not, as on Acquesparta's strength rely,
Or Casale's, that the Scripture had redressed,
This one to shorten, that to mystify:—
Buonventura in my name my life expressed.

"From Bagnoregio,—where those put in trust
As high officials left hand cure imposed;
Illuminato and Agostin first,
Those the barefooted, with a rope had been enclosed:—

"To God in friendship they had wished to draw;—
Ugo of Sanvittore, and with him
Peter of Spain, and Peter Mangiadore;—
The former making twelve small books the dark to stem.

"Nathan the Prophet, Metropolitan,
Chrysastom and Anselmo, all of those
Who with Donato gave Art worthier place,
Rabon near by, and nearer and in lights enclose

"Calabria's Abbot, Goachim, in sway
Of soul prophetic,—each of them to me
Had Thomas told of in the Latin way;—
Discreetly courteous,—if he put these in my company."

PARADISO

Canto XIII

THE ARGUMENT

A new appearance is here presented in the Heavens, where the Polar Constellation assumes the form of a Crown, more complete by the addition of fifteen stars of the first magnitude gathered from either Hemisphere, one especially noted from the Corona Borealis as the daughter of Minos, and deserted by Theseus to become the wife and Priestess of Bacchus.

Dante, much impressed with this new appearance, listens to the interpretation thereof, where old things have passed away for new, and all things of God.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XIII

LET those who can imagine as I saw,
An image now fast fixed in memory,—
The fifteen stars, in climates less or more
Held in their separate companies as sovereigns in the sky.

Wherein the Wain untired, through night and day
Long tethered holds his course and takes no note
Of time to mark in any other way
The vault of Heaven, than in the air serene to float.

Imagine here an entrance, and descry
As towards the centre points its horned ensign
Stars others, join'd in circling harmony,
As if two signs were set only in one design ;

As if to Minas' Daughter had been sent
A chill like death, removed the warmer rays ;—
To one in an ascendancy had meant
A revolution, and the other former ways.

Still to retain in shadow of the true :—
A constellation in a double dance,
Whose circumlatory power I now could view
Out of all former custom, to my own advance.

In such a manner might Chiana led
In Heavenly course all others leave behind:
Where sing they not on Bacchus Odes as fed
But in three persons, the Divine, have food combined,

So that the Human blent with the Divine.
Compare a measure of such height to be
Reduced for us one third in holy shine,
And less a cure for all,—in full felicity.

Seeing so much, a silence I had broke
Where possibly I then took in new life,
Of which the poor of God see but the smoke.
"How many strokes," I said, "it takes where chaff is ripe

"The seed to free, of sweeter love advised."
"Thou must believe," was said, "a breast like this
Where all the dross of love has been excised
Can make a lovelier pillow,—more in lasting bliss

"Then cheek the world had known to so much cost:—
Though possibly precursor in a blow
Else had to seed its satisfaction lost;—
And every stroke received leaves more the white in show:—

"In some such manner as hereafter led,
To see infused through this the more of light—
Giving full value to a force that fed,
And possibly admired the more seen in a higher flight;

"As narrative hereafter told of bliss;—
The better valued as its ends unfold.
The eyes responsively upturn'd to this,—
No secondary good, when in its sequence told

"In truth which is as centre to the round;—
And dies not ever, but in living rife:—
Not in the splendour of ideals found,
But in the loved fruition of the Sire of Life.

"A light so loving that its beams are bent
To give to life a newer sustenance—
Which all of other love aside has sent
For love that nothing could dissever,—as mischance.

"Which of its bounty gathers here each sun,
And gives new splendour in new life sustained,—
Eternally revolved within this one,—
Nor liable to accident if greater height attained,—

"As in contingency intention shown
To germinate,—and give to seed new phase;—
Or without seed,—without the seed had grown,
In Heavenly movements all of other forms displace.

"Mere candlelight to those in former lead;—
Made as ideal signs to fit one mould,
In more or less of shining power to read
All the hereafter had in former signs foretold.

"Brought thus to pass within some middle place—
According as its seed the better fruit:—
So much diverse you can in genius trace,—
And not to merest wax the light of Heaven impute.

"But as in Nature we can oft recall
How much an artist's work is seen displaced:—
By manner of his art—to fade or fall,
Until a warmer love than this has been replaced

"In primal virtue's orderly design;—
More of perfection then to be acquired;—
To Earth the more of worth might this assign
If animal perfection had before retired

"Than in such manner they the Virgin take:—
If thy opinion can with this agree
And yet all human nature not forsake;—
As though two persons met,—from one had wished to flee:—

"Not further with this subject I proceed;—
For how without it would this man appear?
The better for his comprehensions need
Ask why he pays so much for that he sees not here.

"Thy thoughts behind another motive hid
Beyond thy choice has given a strict demand.
I had not spoken thus, so much had said,
If in another rule supreme this might not stand

"To be preferd seen in another reign,
Not known of yet,—as numbered in an N.
An impulse from above for need's sustain,—
As by some accident exchanged for former movements, when

"To those without, it would unusual seem—
Where given a Middle Class too much of power
Triagonal,—they of resistance dream.—
Hence if I speak of those who hold the Regal dower,—

"A royal reticence leaves much untold:—
As of an arrow's mark left less in care,—
Within this higher light I less unfold:—
Where many are the kings, and good are rare.

"With such distinction take me as in debt;—
The power reserved for those belief can share
In the First Father,—our delight when met;
And where thy feet in fall might give thee less of care

"If later movement to mankind be left.—
To them make known, nor to their sight deny
Those many,—of all good regard bereft:—
Without distinction can approve, or give the lie;—

"In apposition would all others bend;—
According their opinion, a false start,
Affection without intellect would blend:—
See how in vain they strive who from a shore depart,—

"And not agreed, in movement stand aloof:—
Seeking for truth,—have given to Art less care,—
Parmenide, Melisso, Brisso, proof
With others how they land they know not where.

"Sobello, Arrio, counted fools among,—
When with rude spade they Scripture overturn,
Making the right side up to seem the wrong:
Secure in a belief the people less might learn

"And rightly judge that in esteem first held,—
As in its blade, in growth yet inmature:—
Which as an earlier fruit I had beheld
As berry harsh and wild,—and found when more secure

"And possible, a rose that bloomed at top.
Already see how hurried in their course
Without a hindrance and without a stop
The rivers to the sea in flow to gain in force.

"Let not dame Bertie, or ser Martino
Seeing another stolen sacrifice,—
Presume in council of the Divine to know
Which is the one to fall, and which in power to rise."

PARADISO

Canto XIV

THE ARGUMENT

Dante is much impressed with the revelation he is commissioned to declare, and in the increased splendour of the starry sphere, where Mars shone with a whiter light than when within it the Crusaders had remarked the Sign of the Cross.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XIV

WATER within its circuit still will glide,
Held in a rounded vase if joged thereby.
Within my thought the words will still abide,
Though sudden accident disturb, as I could then descry

Of glorious life that Thomas could reveal
Between his words,—Beatrice gladly know
Silent ;—when this commenced nor wishing to conceal
In word or thought the truth that from such root could grow :—

"Tell him if light wherefrom so much can bloom,
Remains with you eternally as now
In each retained :—tell as ye can to whom
Such knowledge is secured, not seen as yet below ;—

"Which gives more pleasure in its pictured tales,
Than is revealed where anthems voice the height.—
And in this circle more devout prevails,
Surrounding with a newer and unheard delight.

"Those who regret that they must still retain
A life above, have never known how fair
Falls the refreshment of the Eternal rain,
Where one and two and three in lasting life can share.

"Together reign as two and three and one,—
Not circumscribed but as together bound
Three in harmonious voices joined as one,
Where spirits of the just in the same tune are found."

And I whilst listening where the light most came,
Heard as in lower circle, modestly,
As to the Angel Mary might the same,—
Response :—"So much as Paradise love's feast can be

"So much our garments take in rays of light,—
With ardour as a vision we adored ;—
Which larger grace exceeds so much in height,
When glorious flesh in holiness has been restored

"Where in more ardent brilliancy it glows,
As greater light from Highest good is given,—
That in large measure nothing separate owes,
And all the vision has so much enlarged in Heaven.

"But as mere carbon where the flame to feed
Is debted for its light of sovereignity,—
If grown from it has still so much its need ;—
The smoke therein so bred in the surroundings see,

"As made apparent even to the flesh,
When everything on earth is hid thereby :—
Which brings not here their labours, to refresh
Those that within it can so much delight descry."

This had appeared to suddenly accord
With one and other heart, as said amen
To that so well described in death's record,—
As showing truly their desires as held by mortal men ;—

Where these perhaps had learned to draw the same
From Parents or by others held as dear,—
Who thus would build an everlasting name :—
When lo ! amidst the lights there could appear

A lustre that above all others showed,
Fresh from the Orient,—and a way disclose
That would extinguish all to wax they owed;—
When Heaven itself seemed moved within the Light to those

To whom it would appear as truth new found;—
And seemed to me as a fresh sustenance,
Beginning then to take me at a bound
Beyond all others, out of due circumference.

Oh what a glow of Holy Spirit came
As in a moment suddenly to shine
Into mine eyes, nor punish with its flame,—
And where Beatrice shone more brilliant still, and mine;

Where others if not wished, need follow thought:—
As virtue to my eyes became revealed,
Alone and with my Lady higher brought;—
Contented that the stars in brighter gold were sealed,

And rounded more than in their usual guise;—
As held my heart within a starry sphere,
Where one and all to God make sacrifice.—
As more agreeably to a newer grace appear

Than as before within myself I knew
In ardour of a sacrifice to fail;—
Unsuitable in offering, and not true,
And where so much the light was robbed, that I could hail

A splendour in redoublement to fall:—
Oh Elios how adorned the stars can be!
Where as distinguished amidst great and small
Of whiter light, a world within its poles I see,—

And so iniced as left in doubt the wise
If in a constellation so profound,
Mars in the rays of its old sign could rise,—
That makes conjunction of a quadrant,—and a round.

When back a memory to my genius came
Of those who held for light the Cross of Christ:
Following I thought unworthily the same:—
But those who take his Cross and thus can follow Christ

Might now excuse me, inasmuch I leave
Those who a cord of whiteness can entwine
From horn to horn:—from crown to foot receive
The light,—not varied in a scintilation's shine

As to appear direct or sideways bent;—
Or swift, or slow, returning to the sight
Corporeal atoms moved in their descent,
Sunbeams to flicker so,—they overshadow light;—

Defective make where art and genius wrought,—
As if to jar the harp that time withstood
Of many cords;—and much tintattle brought
To those who heard the notes, and not well understood.

So had a light appeared to me within,
As gathered to the Cross a melody
That ravished me, though yet unknown the Hymn;—
And much increased when in a higher tone there came to me

As to myself:—"Arise and conquest make
Of those who comprehend it not, and hate."—
And I enamoured so much, for love's sake
Could leave all else when bound in such a sweet constraint.

Perhaps my words too daring may appear,
Postponing pleasure to the beautous eyes;—
In that a marvellous view is not seen near,—
Only foreseen,—and as a living impress it supplies

All that of beauty could be heightened yet.—
So might I not a truths perversion fear;—
And self excused, if accusation get
For holy pleasure;—when revealed the more sincere.

PARADISO

Canto XV

THE ARGUMENT

Dante now meets the Shade of his unknown great-grandsire, Cacciaguida, from whom on his mother's side he took the name of Alighieri, and hopes to glean some information of a lost hereditary title: this however disillusions him by relating the lost splendours of Florence.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XV

THE kindly will that from a fountain flows
Uninteruptedly if love descends,
Is freed from all that gain could interpose
To silence a sweet Lyre,—and after sends

A holiness to cords that once lay hid;—
When melody relaxed becomes more free.
How should I know how much just prayer was rid
Of sustenance, though silently with this agree.

More in the wish to silence a great grief
Than in desire of things Eternal worth;—
From a spoilt love of this to have relief
If through the air serene this fall like rain on Earth—

Immediately to chase the day's hot claim;
Whilst stedfast eyes could gaze on more secure
The apparent stars late hidden by a flame:—
As in their languid shine the eyes could more endure,

As might the Horn in light direct the eyes
To stars more splendid in the Cross that shine
As gems that part not it entirety,
In glow that lies behind its alabaster shrine.

As might Anchisis, freed from Shades delay
(Thus midway has my Ancient Muse begun)
In fields Elysian newly come to stay,
With more alacrity new eyed ran there to meet his son :—

"Oh thou," this said ;—"in my descent infused
The grace of God,—how is it thou canst dwell
Behind the gates of Heaven, as if exclused !"—
Thus voiced,—I saw a light, which after on me fell

As turned upon my Lady all my gaze ;—
All of uncertainty in this to shun ;—
So much of ardour could her eyes then raise,
As made I thought my Paradise of Grace begun.

Where in renewed delight I thought I found
What added spirit to my first desire :—
Not comprehending yet a more profound
Election ;—less in my necessity's require ;—

That by a mortal sign might be disturbed ;—
Until the Arc of ardent love was freed
From its intolerance, and I, preserved
Till comprehension more profound could meet my need.

This said that First ;—my interest to amend—
"Blessed art thou to be of three the one
That of my seed could courtesy extend."
And after this: "If bounteousness on thee descend, my son,

"It is from study over that great Book,
Before a page of white its brown assumed ;—
Explained so much of care in this I took,—
Thank those who in a higher flight the wing had plumed

"To point the more, my son, thy Heavenward flight ;—
Thou must believe what to my thought comes first,
As ray that gathers not too much the light,—
Making the most befit a Sixth,—ere Fifth is nursed.

"The whilst I know more pleasure can belong
Than I could give thee,—less in the demand,
Of one returned to live in life's gay throng—
The more or less believed; of this to understand.

"For here is life,—mirrored as primal thought
Had first partaken,—and is here revealed.
But why this sacred Love so much has caught
My vision, must remain awhile from thee concealed.

"My voice adapted solely for thy need;—
Drawn hither by thy will, less in desire
Of my response,—another's more decreed."
At this I turn me to Beatrice where my thoughts aspire:—

And as I listened,—this made her a sign
That to my wishes gave its added wing—
As thus she spake: "Affection like to thine
Is the first burden that to mortals of their cares can bring.

"Because a sun that over you will burn,
Unequal in its cold and heat and light,—
As lessened good you always will discern;—
Though mortals will not hear my arguments aright.

"Where much diversity is found in you,
Altho' the wing has grown beneath to all."—
I, as a mortal failed to take this view—
A speech for more of thankfulness I could forestall;

Less heartily would take my parent's feast;—
To whom I said: "Oh thou whose topaz shine
Worth of all other jewelry exprest,—
Say, I beseech, how possibly thy name had matched with mine."

"Oh branch of that, where I can apprehend
So much clear honesty,—I was thy root."
With my desire could thus his answer blend;—
"A name at least from me thy parents after took,

"More than a hundred years past,—since I went
The mountain's circling cornice first to know:—
I gave my name to thy grandsire's descent;—
Better for him if deeds less fatal garnerage show.

"Where Florence had her ancient circle kept:—
Where yet she holds early and late her prayer—
Not then of peaceful modesty bereft;—
The coronal and chain less thought of there

"As personal ornaments, the less proclaimed;—
The new born daughter not a father's dread
Of after misery,—its life not spared;—
His house less powerful,—if his family less spread.

"Like Sardanapalus, thereafter know
How much a secret chamber can conceal;—
And Montemalo from its height to show
How much a fracture could to those below reveal.

"Where seen—Bellincion;—Bertie, in right place
In his hard leathern suit, and with him come
His Lady,—not there shown in painted face;—
The sons of Nerlie, and of Vecchio, clothed without a blame

"In garments made their suitable attire;—
Their women too, the feathered flax to ply;—
How fortunate in all they could require:—
Not sepulchred by France, on bed of death to lie.

"These waiting watch, the one, the crib in view
In mother's tongue console the babe,—and see
Another led the Distaff's tresses through
Telling the tales of Troy, or Rome, or Fiesole:—

"Nor held the marvellous narative less true
Than told of Ciangella, from the store
Of Lappo;—Salterello;—whence they drew
Tales told of Cincinnatus, or Cordelia—long before

"By Mary's name invoked came my birth cry;
And in your Baptistry I took my name
As Cacciaguido;—Christian made thereby;—
My Brothers Moronto, and Eliseo, holding it the same.

"And from the Val de Pido came my spouse;
And thus thy surname from my kindred grew:—
Following the Emperor Conrad gave my House
The military favours good works will endue.

"Since then I turned me from a law's distress
Inequitous, the people that had spoiled;—
The Pastor had despoiled of righteousness:—
Wherefrom I fled, when troubled crowds embroiled;

"And disillusioned, from the world withdrew—
Where vanities the many souls betray;—
Released from much of martyrdom in view,
Within a Kingdom's peace received,—I came to stay."

PARADISO

Canto XVI

THE ARGUMENT

Dante's ancestor, continuing his discourse, has much to say of the Florentines in the decay of their city, where his family once held their seat in the sixth ward of the Court; this distinction having ceased in the new numbering of the City.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XVI

"O H light esteemed our bloods affinity
If on its glories those below can wait!
If our affection languished there I see
How far removed the cause now we are here relate.

"Not that attraction lessened in delay,—
Only in Heaven it is more glorified;
Well for thee if a cloak worn day by day
The old and wornout pieces scissors can divide.

"As you in Rome had first to suffer smart,
Because in family the less preserved."—
At this Beatrice who was screened apart
Smiled, and immediately my thoughts had then recured

To Genivere,—once read of in a book
Whose one false step had made for her a fall;
Then with my sire beloved converse retook:—
"Surely thou art my Father—on thy name I call

"To lift me up in that wherein I fail
And of myself not seem to be the higher."
In such delight the newer shores I hail,
Of sustenance they gave I stayed not to enquire.

"Tell me at once my loved progenitor
How many years are since thy name emblazed?
Did holy John, then, to his sheepfold draw
A multitude that from the heights of knowledge gazed?

"Say if could avarice then the wind delay,
And give to darkened coal its flame of shine
Resplendent, and my blandishments display?"
Then his reply—his eyes more beautiful than mine,

Sweeter his voice, his accent soft and low,
If less of modern phrase in this it caught:—
"That time my sainted mother in birththroe
Craved her deliverance of me, in her *Ave* sought;—

"Five hundred years and fifty since this flame
Rekindled underneath our Lion's feet,
Where our same ancestors had borne a name
Held at the first their place,—the sixth and last of seat.

"Where in your annual games they prized the Race;—
Sufficient of thy great ones deem this word,
How they came in, and out, best to efface,
If for some reason honesty made their record.

"Where all of those who once could carry arms,
The Baptistry and Mars that might pass through,
Are now left fifth of those that death disarms:—
The country men hereafter mingling with the few;—

"As Campi, Certaldo, and Figghine,—
Those that the Arts had more begun to show;—
Oh how much better than their parting see
Such neighbours I could tell of,—seen at Galluzzo.

"With Trespiano made your boundary,
Now held so fastly, and within the stench
Of the Aguglion Rustic, where those see
From Signa, the keen-eyed, siting on barter's bench.

"See there a people less the world's betrayed,—
To seem but stepdame in a Cæsar's part.—
Where a fond mother had her sons arrayed,
The Florentines retaining still their Change and Mart.

"Nor Commerce turned away from her good will—
To make with Semifonte worse accounts
And Montemarlo hold with Conti still,
The Cerci known to keep within Acone's bounds.

"And Buondelmonte perhaps in Valdegreive.—
In less confusion the chief men be found,
Who body sustenance must yet receive;—
A blind bull by his plunge has made a greater sound

"Than foolish lambkin, venturing on the Height,
One sword in volt is sometimes more than five:—
See Luni, Ubisaglia, in their flight
Chiusi and Sinigalia not in strength revive.

"Hence understand how families can fade
If seen a Citadel is left forlorn:—
And mortal things will pass to their decade,
Like you be hid in other forms with life withdrawn.

"See how in Heaven the moon withheld in power
Sends wide the waters from the shores adrift:—
So Florence changed in fortune sees the hour
Of hunger, when bereaved her time of thrift.

"No marvel if I tell thee of the fall
Of Ughi, Catilini, Fillipi,
Greci, Omanni, Alberichi, all
Once the good citizens, as such no more to be.

"Amongst the ancients these all past away—
Yet as the Great are held in memory
As Sonnella and Arca still to stay—
When gone, Soldaniere, Ardenghi, Rostichi;

"From out whose ports o'ercharged the fleets were sent,
That with such fellonies would sink the bark,
Gone are the Ravignani, whence descent
Of the Counts Guido, these, and many more of mark;—

"As Bellenceone, holding the first place;—
Those too of Pressa, that in strong require
Of Galigaio, on their doors would trace
The apple, with the sword hilt,—not in their desire.

"How great were once Colomma del Vaio,
Succhetti, Giuochi, and Barucci,
Galli, Sifanti,—blushed their trades to show,
A stock from whence were grown the Calfucci.

"Who once so great, had afterwards to draw
The cars of Sizzi, and Arrigucci:
Oh how less satisfying when they saw
Superb in cloth of gold their Florence flower could be.

"As lessened all in her of nobler deed:—
And hence have grown the Fathers of those men
Who in your vacant Church have since decreed
The fat of pasturage had been meant for food of men,

"Whence came the Arogants, who furious grown,
Put all to flight in threatening of their teeth—
That first the purse, and then the lamb had shown;—
And hence were born the men of usual height beneath

"As Ubertin Donati, scarcely pleased
To have an Heir of lower parentage:—
Or Caponsacco, who of state releived,
In merchandise at Fiesole could first engage.

"I tell thee things incredible yet true;—
Not one small circle through an open door
Entering, as Pera held them up to view
To the Militia, who the same adornment wore.—

"Where priviledged, great Barons only take
The Thomas festival for comfort meant;
As comes to pass when those who can partake
In company,—with uniforms are more content.

"Seen thus made Commoners in Arms array,
A people in the field to seem as one:—
And all to show their frontal badge one day,—
The Guallerotti, Importuni seen as one.

"Then would be known the Borgo more content,
When new companions less disjointure make.—
Houses from out their ports, your fleets were sent,
With justice scorned;—must needs of death partake.

"And more of joy in their hereafter life
Where ornament is held as a consort;—
Oh Buondelmonte how much less were rife
The evil, if in marriage, more of comfort sought!

"More joy had those who afterwards could mourn
God had not granted them to Emas' flood,
Before their City had been made its bourne,—
And a stone guard, as formerly, in front had stood

"Protector of a bridge that Florence made:—
Not as the victim of her peace to be,—
Where other people left her when decayed.
If here in my repose, I mourn in sight of thee,

"With all those just ones in this glory met;—
I can the better make the jems be known,
If seen the lily with the lance reset;—
And schism like to hers, no vermiel stain has shown."

PARADISO

Canto XVII

THE ARGUMENT

Dante, disappointed, fails to see any advantage in the new career predicted for him by Casciaguida, and the first intimation of his banishment from Florence, though he acknowledges the benefit afterwards derived from this discourse.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XVII

LIKE to that Son who to Clymene came
To learn less doubtfully of her his birth ;—
Like Sons of Fathers chary of their fame,
The more esteemed the better known their heritage on Earth.

So I, in this, not to be less observed
Of Beatrice,—her holy lamp who held,
A light that at the first my path had served :—
As thus she spake : "Be not as those who have their light withheld :—

"But showing all thy inward stamp in sign :—
Not that more knowledge should give self increase
By what is said,—their custom to resign,
Men following hence thy words—their thirst appease."

"Oh plant beloved," I said, "I stand confessed
That thoughts of mine do not with these combine :—
As when two lines in a triangle prest,
Must fail for want of standing when they so incline."

Feeling all this myself,—as wonderingly
I saw beyond my comprehension's power
That Virgil now must less attractive be
Than in the Mount's ascent he passed with me the hour ;

Discomforting my soul, whilst yet I yearned
Towards her most loved on Earth, that bade me flee
From all I ever yet below had learned,—
How could such weightier words of mine be told in honesty.

And in my will I felt the more content
To keep a fortune I had thought I found,
A satisfaction to my thirst had sent;—
Then spake that other,—than Beatrice more profound:

"Not that preamble thine in people's say,
Who of their own invention make to bleed
The Lamb of God, their sin to take away,—
But thine a clearer word more precious in their need."

This Latin from my Parent loved I took,
Which seemed pervaded with his own sweet smile:—
As writing held within a copying book,
As a reflection, and not eaqualing it in style

Which the Eternal presence less exprest,
For of necessity this could not take
A likeness that the glass has less imprest:—
The currents in their downward course a vessel's movements make.

Though hence there came into my listening ear
Sweet harmonies that blent with organ's sound;—
A voice I heard, hence in its tones more clear:—
Then: "As Hippolytus was not in Athens found

"Soon as he heard the tale of hateful news;
So Florence must hereafter part from thee.
This as my wish thou wouldst not now refuse,
Seeing for fact that Christ was sold in bartery.

"Where a hard blow inflicted in that place
Sends back a cry for vengeance,—yet will bear
Its testimony held in that disgrace;—
And thou if banished from the things first held as dear,

"In this and that will find an arrow sent,
Will afterwards but make the Arc reset ;—
When thou wilt know how hard it is if lent
The bread of others, and their stairs to climb if met

"Those on their shoulders would thy cause sustain
Together with thee, through the railings fall :—
Companioned with a bad and foolish train,
Ungrateful saying thy example made them fall.

"Yet wait awhile,—these will the fact discern
They, and not thou, the Temple keepers fall.
From their base appetites removed will learn
How much more loveliness has come from this their fall.

"And the first refuge lent thee as abode,
Is by his courtesy the great Lombards,—
The Sacred Bird who on his ladder showed,—
And he will hold thee there within his kind regards.

"As first concession made between you too,
Till more in tardiness the others gave :—
See how is born to him, to Empire true,
Beneath a mightier star,—the Son his works to crave.

"Not many in a likeness to this one,
In slender years of nine to make his choice,
As if the wheels of time should be outrun,—
And to a newer age than this send forth his voice.

"Though first the Gascon, as high Arrigo
And Chief appears,—a spark from Virtue sent ;—
Not in the care of money or its woe,
From whose magnificence his enemies not silent went :—

"Seeing the deeds of his munificence
Transmuting evil thoughts into esteem,
As many people could have proved him since,—
A combination of the rich and poor alike to seem.

"This as a thought within thy memory stay;—
And unbelieved of those who less can see.
Sware then my son which is thy chosen way,
If this is as mere incidence, described to thee.

"As newborn thought to dwell within, the while
Not live with those who as perfidious grown,
Will see thy stature less to fit their style,—
And in some way would make their perfidy be known."

So much this holy soul, without assent
Had by his silence to confession thrown
My spirit, as if arrow on me spent;—
So I commenced as though on this desire had grown;

And doubting,—of him further council sought;—
In wish to follow where so much to love:
"Full well I see my Father thou hast brought
Hard times against me,—so if sent my service from above:—

"Those cherished, as myself, to disappear.
Yet Providence if good would love me so,
That in their places still I hold them dear,—
And not for newer love my cherished ones forego.

"Let my unfinished love on earth decline,
When to the summit of the mountain led;
My Lady's eyes more beautiful in shine
Have made the light of Heaven seem hers instead."

So much opprest by failure, I could see
The argument if good, a foolish thought:—
And timid, then, my friend I failed to see,—
In time I lost that impress, and new colour caught

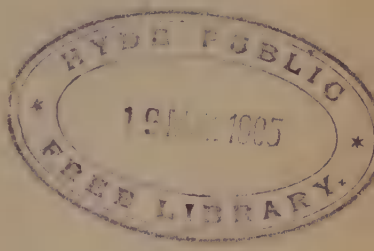
From light where all my treasure could be told,
And I rejoicing find within my view
How much a ray of light reflects the gold,
This his reply to me: "Conscience must first endue

"A will not all thy own,—to others make
Less smoothe thy words,—unsuited their design,
That see in vision all their lies mistake;—
Leaving those to their scratch who to their itch incline.

"So might thy words, vexatious first to taste,
Leave vital nourishment in their digest;—
Making thy cry fly on the wings of haste,—
Filing the higher altitudes, the higher in protest.

"Not honored less by this thy argument,—
Because is shown to them in circling space
The Mount, and dolorous valley of descent,—
That souls may note it;—not to famine give their place,

"Whilst those who hate it have not in them power
A door to shut if faith has much to say;—
Grown from the root unknown, newborn this hour,
When for an argument like this there is no pay!"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PARADISO

Canto XVIII

THE ARGUMENT

Beatrice in her new aspect gives yet more delight to Dante, though at first he hesitates over his new theme as unsuited to his Muse. Afterwards more advanced, he feels he could leave all to follow her, and redress his former songs, when he would become a leader of men. In the distance he reviews his reviewers.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XVIII

SILENT, alone rejoicing in his words
That blessed Spirit stayed who to my taste
Brought me the bitters with his sweet records.—
There spake my lady who to God would bring me in her haste:—

"Change all these thoughts, think not I would be near
In crooked ways to one I wished to ease."—
At this I turned towards her I loved to hear
Altho' abandoned thus, the less her eyes could please.

Not that my talk became more difident,
Changed in my thoughts I could not well redress
One as a guide so much above me sent;—
Meanwhile the power of loving her would seem to be no less.

As freed me from a former felt desire,
Seeing eternal peace on her was sent
Nor then could I Beatrice less admire
In face,—altho' her smile a newer aspect lent.

When coming towards me with her lighted smile;
"Flee from all this," she said, "and listen now
How not in Paradise my eyes beguile."—
The which I saw were free from all of former glow:—

Which fell on me as from some holy shrine,
Who had no power to give them like return ;—
And for what reason I could not divine ;—
So I commenced : "just reached and as a new sojourn

"The hill upon whose top I saw the tree
Might well supply me fruit, nor lose its leaves ;—
To spirits more advanced I would decree
The songs that Heaven has taught, and louder voiced
receives

"Than Muse of mine,—untutored to this Height."
Because one corner of the Cross I viewed,
In cloud of fire ;—and counted stars in sight
Whose glory at a distance I had less reviewed.

As in the dimness of the light I read
A name like Joshua's, in a man's recall,
Nor noted further this so soon as said,
When the great Maccobean's light not less could fall.

Contented read with them pale Orlando :—
When Carlo Magnus my attention drew,
And eagle eyed, I might discern the show
Of Guiglilem's name, and possibly Riccardo's too.

And that Duke Godfrey, upheld by him
So much the Cross, and Robert Guiscardo :—
As in the higher lights saw through the dim,
The soul of her I held in converse with me now.

Which made the songs of Heaven take artist's sound,
And changed all that before had held its place :—
Beatrice[1] in my songs hereafter found ;—
The higher robes of hers in older signs to trace.

[1] Comparing this with the Sonnets in the "Vita Nuova," Part XIII.

All of my thoughts speak only of my love,
And have in them a great variety
Those less esteemed I willingly let fly ;
One for some foolish reason not remove.

If less her light had shone upon me then?
So much enjoyment there her aspect gave,
I could leave all a solo thus to win ;—
And hence should all good works, with her my pathway pave.

Whereat the men of virtue might remark,—
And following my storehouse looking round,
Might enter Heaven itself within the Arc,—
Seeing the great adornment miracles had found.

That in a little while hence might dispel
Its colour in the white of ladies' cheek ;—
If after from my care my burden fell,
And eyes of mine no longer to my followers speak :—

Then tempered to the whiteness of a star,
Take measure of the reap within I left.—
In Jove-lit taper light I see afar,
In starlight's gleam of love my following not bereft.

It like the Birds newly arrived in shore,
Well satisfied with that whereon they fed,
Hungry or simple crowd along it more,
Yet might some holy creature through the light that sped,

Singing in flight, take there in figured sign,
Or D, or I, or L, the first to note :—
Divining one to be in that design,
Arrested for a little while, then mute remote.

One for my solace sweet deceit would prove,
The other of my tears the mist dispel:
Solely in pity both agreed to dwell,
Trembling with fear of that my heart could move.

Unconscious which materials both I take ;
Wishing to say as if I said it not ;
Am in my thoughts to seem as love distrought.

And if with all agreed in my escort,
Convenient mine enemy I make,
Madonna Pity my defence so brought.

Oh Pegasus divine that genius led,
To be made glorious and be long lived ;—
Holding with thee a citadel as head,
Illustrate me in show,—if thus to be revived.

The power within my shorter verse expressed,
Say how in volt can seven a five enclose,
In vocal harmony to be expressed :
So might I make a note of debt to thee I hold.—

Demonstrate how, strictly in verb and name,
Deligite Justitiam when so writ
Qui judicates Terram ends the same ;—
Though possibly in M a vocal fifth might fit

A residue ordained in this to show
More silver, than had gold, belettered Jove ;—
When from the colums of the M in glow
Rises a song too well as I beleive to move

Whence no disturbing childish hand could aim
The missals that as residue could rise
In thousand sparks, and afterwards acclaim
The innumerable fables dreamers could devise.

This to revive,—when more or less the lights—
Have dwindled and gone out,—or lost in space,
As if the Sun dismissed them from his height :—
This quietly to send of each into his place

The neck and head of an Aquila, seen
Of different fire than this to be inflate,—
In its depicting no true guide had been ;—
But this a guide hereafter,—thus to commemorate

Much of its value brought into the nest :—
That other blessed one from Heights above
Engardened in the Lilies as exprest,
Content to follow at a distance in a slower move.

Oh thou sweet star, engemed in jewel's glow,
As I depicted, that our truths should stray
So far the Heavens alone thy jewels show!
For this my prayer, the mind perceptive to portray

Thy movements and thy virtue might be drawn
To show whence came the smoke that dims thy ray;
And in another age less vexed and torn
With trade and barter, that have paved a temple's way

And walled its signs of martyrdom therein.
Oh that Militia I could contemplate,
Adored in colour of the Earth within;—
From all of ill example freed, in blest Estate—

Who formerly for war the sword could hold,—
Partakers now of bread that here and there
A pious Father would from none withhold;—
But thou who writest as to cancel what is written here,

Think of the Peter and the Paul who died
For wine so spoilt, and that they live withall;—
Truth told to thee:—I that had thought to hide,
Drawn for a martyr since, know not the Fisherman or Paul.

PARADISO

Canto XIX

THE ARGUMENT

Dante is aware of the presence of some gathered glorified spirits, under the symbol of a bird. He converses with them, and comments on European Governments, and the prevailing forms of religion.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XIX

THEN there appeared to me with wings outspread,
The beauteous image of a great delight,—
As concert of one bliss on souls had shed;
Each like a ruby, flushed with an excess of light,

The sun's reflection, I could only think;—
Those that I saw but for a little while,
Were never spoken of, or writ in ink,—
Nor might imagination comprehend their style.

And those I saw I heard speak through their bill,
In sound of voice like as to *My and I*,
But in a meaning,—*We and Ours*, was still.
Commencing thus they said:—"For goodness,—Piety,—

"We are exalted thus beyond desire;—
And on the Earth leave it memorial fact;—
That wicked men commending may admire,
Altho' they follow not the story, and have goodness lacked."

As one in warmth of many loves, it fell,
Mingling from out the Image as one sound;—
And I near by:—"Ye in delight who dwell,
Like everlasting flowers in one, to shed perfume around—

"Tell me, ye spirits, why as in a fast,
Long time the Earth had held me hungering so ;—
Nor food I found of any taste to last ;—
For in the realms of Heaven I well may know

"Justice divine is in reflection seen.
Why learned I not like you to wing my flight ?"
And whilst I waited :—knew how doubt had been
The cause, now here, now there,—not tasting their delight.

The Falcon from its hood then moved its head :
And in applause flapped an admiring wing,
As willing all its beauty to outspread,—
And by such sign I knew how Grace Divine could bring

To those so filled with praise the songs they sing.
Which thus commenced :—"Those in new paths that fly
Farthest on Earth ;—returned with them can bring
Tidings of things they have beheld, and testify.

"Nor yet have power received to be impressed
With the whole universe,—so that the Word
In height's infinity is not expressed ;—
Though this is certain, that the Man so much prefered,

"Who stood the highest of created things,—
By not accepting light, fell far below ;—
Hence is a fault remarked, wherewith it brings
A short remembrance of the good that else would show.

"Nor has it ended yet,—self measured lies ;—
Whilst here, our vision in one ray so brought
Is filled with everything that this supplies ;—
Though in our nature, here so little we had wrought

"Of that first principle,—nor could discern
Much that has since appeared to us so plain ;—
For in Eternal Justice now we learn
How partial on the Earth the good we now obtain.

"And whilst upon the shore that ends the land
We saw the ocean as before us spread,
But little of its depths could understand;—
For light has not through clouds of flesh its fullness shed;

"Although an opening in obscurity
Has shown the ascent of Justice in a way:—
Such was the question as unsolved by thee
How men as native born on India's shores that stay,

"And never heard the name of Christ in sound,
Or bound it on them as a written law,—
Yet of his will and goodness they have found:—
Although the Word in human, sinless life,—they never saw.

"And died without baptism as thou saith:—
How should the Justice have condemned them so?—
Where was their crime, if this was not their Faith?
And thou thyself, as sitting on the bench to show

"The measurement of thousand miles that lie
In judgment of a sword of one short span?—
Certainly he who could disqualify
The Scriptures thus to you,—must be a marvellous man.

"Oh, animals of clay, your minds how gross!—
The foremost will which gave itself to you,
And all the height of goodness can disclose—
Within Himself, must still remain unmoved and true.

"Though so much justice, so much you consume;—
Yet all created good must still be drawn
Like its first cause, to radiate and illume;—
And like the stork, that to a hardier nest her young has
borne,

"And nurtured them with oft convenient food;—
As these their eyelids lift in hunger's need,
Imagining a blessing of great good
Beneath a wing, whose counsel they perforce must heed,—

"Returned to them, and singing thus she says:—
'Wherefore my note did you not comprehend,—
As mortals know Eternal judgments ways?'
And afterwards they follow where translucent light ascends.

"In Holy Spirit's guidance; not as where
The Romans in the world a sign revere."—
Then I resume:—"Within this loftier sphere
I see that none depart,—the Christ believing hear;—

"Who first or later bound them to His law:—
Yet many see I, that could Christ invoke,
The lesser seem,—the judgment seat before,
Than those the name of Christ have never heard or spoke.

"So when the Christian,—who the Ethiop, damned,—
As these are parted a Collegiate pair,—
The one received,—the other worthless scan'd;—
What will the Persian say who in the laws had share,

"When he shall see the volume opened wide,
Wherein is writ so much to his disgrace;—
And in it see the work of Albert hide,
As moved the pen,—could thus his kingdom rend and raze.

"Then shall he see such grief as by the Seine
Those suffer who make false the money's worth;—
And die by such a blow as these sustain;—
There see the Grandeur's thirst,—the Pride upon the Earth,—

"As fills with folly Englishman and Scot;—
That will not let them keep within their bound;—
And see how luxury gives to them such blot
As in the Spaniard and Bohemian has been found,

"Who know not of the price, nor have desired;—
Then see the lame man—that Jerusalem fed
Professing bounty,—not as was desired;—
And all the avarice, and the meanness men had led

"As guardians of an Island's fiery land,—
Where Anchises of old fulfilled his state.
By all these things, then, well they understand
How much,—how little of it, fragments can relate,

"That give large notice in so small a space;—
Whilst there appears in each deformed, a stock
Wherein the Barba and his brethren trace,—
Who grieved the nations so,—two Crowns had made one block:—

"Such as have Portugal and Norway found,—
Russia, that evil coin made Venice count;—
Blest Hungary if they leave thee not more ground:—
And beautiful Navarre, for whom they armed the mount!

"Infer from these, whom avarice now can claim,
How [1]Farmagosta and Nicosia's streets
Give to their beasts such loud lament and blame
As never from the flanks of others like complaining greets."

[1] Two principal streets in the Island and Kingdom of Cyprus.

PARADISO

Canto XX

THE ARGUMENT

In this the Fifth Circle, Dante is interviewed by Ripheus, a worthy King of Troy, eulogised by Virgil as in the *Æneid.* "*Ripheus justissumus unus qui fecit in Tencris, et servantissimus æqui.*"

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XX

WHEN that great Light which all the world illumes
Sinks for awhile beneath our hemisphere—
And everything on this side disillumes,—
Then in the heavens and where the sun could first appear

Immediately the many stars repaired
Shine with a lustre that its flames renew :—
In such a sight of Heaven I fain had shared
With all the world a sign their dukes might have in view—

If through beneficence the beak was still :—
Because so much of overlight there came
In a new way, a song begun in will
Lapsed into silence, after first, I lisped its name.

Oh what sweet love is this, can bring a smile
Out of its ardour, and in need's supplies
To spirits, as to stars, can bring meanwhile
The holiest of thoughts as reached from Heavenly harmonies.

If less here is imposed the angelic quills ;—
And liker to the murmuring of a spring,
That falls from stone to stone in light's distils,—
Shows the abundance of a source if less it bring :—

Or like a sound that takes in tubes the air
Which permeates and gives the power to all :—
Or eagle from the heights, tuned to declare
So much in murmurings as would Heaven let fall :

To fail in utterance if through the beak
Is given some meaning,—less in form of words :—
Anticipating all my heart would speak
As part of that which left behind such small records.

As for the angelic mortals not retained ;—
To fix their eye upon the sun at will,—
And by the splendour of its force detained ;—
My vision dazzled there, the song left still.

That man on whom a visioned light could fall
Had Cantos of the Holy Spirit strown
In as much splendour as he might recall ;—
And in an Ark's translation, borne from town to town ;—

I knowing well the merit of his songs,
In like affection, made a Councillor—
A recognition make to this belongs,—
If after,—in a Circle Fifth another man I saw

And more as through the bill accosted me :—
As might some widow to console her son,
Knowing how great the loss to him could be
If he not followed Christ ;—as in first law begun

The blessedness of life :—this stood a mark,
As sign the Fifth in this circumference—
To show through bend of the supernal arc
Indulgence he had found—since death, in penitence.

And knowing now Eternal judgment came,
Not by remittance at a costly price—
Which made next day to seem as day the same :—
But following as he thought the lead in law's suffice.

Had good intention if bad fruits to bare ;—
Failing as Pastor where he was a Greek,
Knowing how evil had reduced his share
In a good work, which harmfulness did not bespeak.

And afterwards a world in this destroy ;—
Those who had seen beneath the bended bow
A William fly,—the Earth bereft of joy—
Saw for the living Charles and Frederic more of tears in flow.

See hence how Heaven approached in love's own flame
Can give just kings its likeness when inflate
With an effulgence that reflects the same ;—
Who would believe if to an erring world I should relate

How Trojan Ripheus having made his round,
Shines a fifth light within this holy sphere,—
Finding far more than in the world he found
In depths divine, the shine,—if depths less clear

Had reached his vision,—till at this ascent.
Like a young lark first soaring through the air
Sings, and then silent, till renewed content
Tells the abounding sweetness known and sung of there.

So much this figure could himself imprint
Of an Eternal peace,—gave me desire,
If other things it left in discontent :—
Though yet a doubt there came,—did glass illumine his attire?

Impatient of delay this silence broke,
I heard his voice, "What is it thou wouldst say?"
Nor waiting for reply he had bespoke,
From one who saw in him high festival's array.

Grown more accustomed to the glare in view,
He voiced his words so well, that even I
In admiration of him nearer drew.
"I see thou canst believe my words, but not in fact's supply :—

" Made like to those who know a thing by name,—
In that will well versed, but of its quality—
The essence of it,—ignorant became,
Thy vision's power in this the less to see

" A Heavenly Kingdom violently torn
From warmth of Love and holiness of life ;—
By others will than will Divine upborne ;—
Which conquered seemingly,—retired beyond the strife.

" Not choosing one should take the presidence
Of other,—and so conquered willingly,—
Seeing a preference, would retire from hence—
A Conqueror,—conquered solely through benificence.

" If this as Circle fifth seem to thy view
A marvel, reason for it see,
When Angels Kingdom was not painted true,—
Their bodies parted,—as was held believingly

" By Gentiles,—since by Christians after learned
In faith the firmer stepping-stone to make
If to the Inferno,—not from thence returned ;—
Though in a great goodwill their bones relief would take.

" And others as their living hope had turned
Towards God,—His Mercy possibly by prayer
Might so regard them, if they had discerned
In resurrection power release from where.

" The glories of the Soul were so to speak
Not changed to flesh,—and in some small belief
Of Him, who of its power before could speak,
And through the fire of love, of second death relieve,—

" More worthily to enter on their mirth.
That one who through the depths of grace could sound
A font's distil—as never yet on Earth
Was fathomed in its waves as source profound,—

"Where God in love had set his righteousness,
As in his bounteousness he could bestow,
And to the opened eyes redemption hence
Bring down to Earth,—as in futurity to know:—

"As thus believed in, is not after blent
With Heathendom's corruption,—as reserved
For those perverse, to reprobation sent;—
That one of the Three virtues thy baptism served

"Guarding the Car,—thousands baptised before.
Predestination,—oh how far below
That root of thine, when no relief it bore
In fruitfulness of taste,—first principles to show!

"And oh ye mortals cautiously reflect
How God alone to judge of us is mete;—
Unknown to us the sum of the Elect,
All in a garnered sweetness not the less complete.

"The good in us as good to them akin,—
Because their will and ours in God the same.
So might imagination here begin
A comprehension how this Court of Light became.

"So full,—that sweet of medicine to my soul it brings."—
Then as some Minstrel in a worthy song
Will touch the cords responsive as he sings,—
In greater harmony the pleasure to prolong;—

Thus as he spake,—and I the record kept,—
I saw two lights beneficently blent;—
Two eyes accordant equal light accept
In a great harmony—as moved the spheres in their content.

PARADISO

Canto XXI

THE ARGUMENT

Dante, much impressed with the added beauty of Beatrice, desires if possible she might accompany him to the lower world. Beatrice explains to him her refusal.

Saint Pietro Damiano relates his experience to Dante, and his after aspirations.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XXI

AGAIN my eyes were fixed, at this great Height,
Upon my Lady and my soul on hers :—
With none of less intent than this in sight :—
And she smiles not : after to this refers :—

"Had I but smiled," she said, "thou hadst in this
Been like to Simile to ashes turned ;—
Whilst had my beauty seemed the Stairs of bliss
To the Eternal palace :—as an entrance learned.

"And still to see me, in a higher climb ;—
Not as so tempered, in my radiance share,
Which fails thy power to follow in its shine :—
As leaf might wither,—held within the lightening's glare.

"We have now risen to that splendid Height—
A Heaven the Seventh,—to lie beneath the breast
Of Lion ardent,—where my rays of light
Concealed as yet in mist—have less, thy thoughts imprest ;—

"As of a figure that on glass relied."
Those who could see a pasturage I could share
Which kept in sight her aspect beautified,—
Would know how much was own the leading of her care.

As contrary in mode to that I found
Behind a crystal,—in a word's import :—
The World in seat with its sweet cares surround,—
And underneath the seat,—malignant death's resort

In colors guilded as translucent rays
Saw Heretics barefooted sent below ;—
If these had followed not my brightened ways :—
Nor as in their ascension saw another glow

Which Heaven hereafter might on these diffuse ;—
Bereft of all their natural costume :
As if the Pole were found relieved of use,—
For baldness, had exchanged its all of outer plume.

These of their vanity in some such way—
As from revolvement of a movement known,
Where a rotation makes but short delay,—
Such in a mode I saw how much my Guide was own

For sparkles that hereafter could remain ;—
Now at a certain gradient met in flow,—
Still those the dearest to me would retain,
As in my love I held them still my light below.

Whilst she who in her aspect looked as when
Her silence spake me last,—and mine—until
In my desire to speak my thoughts as then,
She who had known my speech detain'd against my will :—

In sight of Him who sees the all in all,
Bade me make known to her my warm desire ;—
Then I commenced :—" No merit I recall—
In a response to thee so much would then require :—

" And solely of thy choice ask this concede :—
If in my life as blest I stay,—reborn,
Behind thy light,—surely thou must perceive
A reason that would press me so, to live the less forlorn.

"And silent from thy Circle here, could blend
To sweetest symphony our Paradise;—
In sounds that might a greater influence send."
"Thy ear," she said, "as mortal's not thy face belies."

This her response: "Because thou canst not sing
With those on whom Beatrice ceased to smile—
Yet from beneath these holy stairs would bring
Sounds of a festival that tell of this meanwhile.

"If seen in me the light of love's declare,
Not the less pressing it would seem in this
When more and more of fervour we can share—
As in some higher flame made manifest in bliss.

"But that high Charity we here can serve,
Inclined to council, and the World to rule,
Leaves us not then as others might observe."
"I well can see," I said, "in this high light a school.

"With more of liberty in Love's own court;—
Which following Eternal Providence
Has made to others not a less resort;—
If a predestined sacrifice has borne me from it, hence

"Not as at first, let be thy final word:—
That in our midst should shine a central light;—
And in a girdle less be seen a sword
Which Love in a reply has hidden from the sight."

"Because," she said, "the Light Divine has shed
Its penetrating beams on me I speak.
For Virtue after with me is so wed
It raises me above all that I deemed as weak.

"Whilst far above it, I can hence behold
The essential summit where all this is changed,
And see so much of joy in glittering glow,
All of before in clearance of the eyes, exchanged.

"Though charity in warmth can still be mixed
In souls that Heaven unlocked,—with this infuse.
The Seraphim, their eyes on God now fixed
To a demand like thine could only mete refuse.

"Because in Law's unalterable abyss
The Eternal statute is so much obeyed
All of created sight is hid in this,—
Though mortals in their world would laugh, this said

"When thy return with a report they greet:—
So that our presence gives no other sign
Than might insure a stand for steadfast feet.—
They as alone regarding through a mask this shine

"So much as thought in lodgement had a place,—
And not to Heaven's possession dared to fly."
Thus had she given her word, I, to retrace
The questioning I made,—till after would let fly.

"Between two shores of Italy, thy land
And not far distant is the stony track,
A tone repeats,—or sonorous, or bland,
Afar, or near, a word's import,—or sends it back:

"There on a hump,—they call it Catria,
Dissociate stands a lonely Hermitage
A lonely Hermit consecrated saw
Dispense the worship that alone could God engage."

Thus recommenced one—in a third line
A sermon thus bespoke: "Here for a while they stored
The service due to God,—which at the time
Gave me the taste of bread where olive oil was poured,—

"Leaving it lighter,—if as cold as ice.
Not further this in thought to contemplate,
Rendered in lonely cloister its supplies:—
For prayer if fertile—rests not as vain relate.

"If found convenient, to the less revive;—
I, as that Hermit Peter to discry
Behind a house of Nostra Donna's shrive
Another that on Adriano's shore had stood hard by.—

"In mortal's life saw little to remit;
Till I was chosen for the Cap to wear,—
Much evil in disgrace where seen to sit,—
Till Cephas came,—and made in that a great repair:—

"The Holy Spirit's flood, this vessel sent
The better bread,—barefooted, after took
The hospitality to this was lent;—
And here and there would him recall to those in look

"As modern Pastors—that hereafter lead
Mostly to grief, those they behind them held—
Their hands paternal lain upon their head,—
As if two beasts beneath one skin they had beheld.

"Oh Patience, much thou hast still to maintain."—
When this no longer voiced, I saw more large
A flame ascending,—and by this make plain
What every Circle of its beauty had the charge.

Drawn whence I came,—from all of this shut out,
I heard a cry at a great altitude;—
Which could no semblance bear to those remote,—
A thunderous cry,—these words of mine, in vain, include.

PARADISO

Canto XXII

THE ARGUMENT

Dante, oppressed with the novelty of his new surroundings, turns to Beatrice, who councils him as to the enmity he will have to endure when he returns to the world. After St Benedict has appeared and conversed with him, he looks back for a moment on the planetary system beneath him, noting particularly the stars of his nativity in the sign Gemini.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XXII

AMAZED in stupor, turned towards my guide,
Her aid I seek ;—and as a child might run
To that wherein it can the most confide,—
And as the mother soothes her pale and breathless son,

With voice whose tone alone like hers can aid :
Beatrice then :—"Knowest thou not that now
Thou art in Heaven, where all is holy made,
And with a righteous zeal does all things there endow,

"Which has transmuted all the former songs
That held thy power at first within my smile ;
As to a louder note it now belongs,
Mingled with all thy praise, as thou wilt know erewhile.

"Already thou mayst hear the vengeful cry
Which the first signal gives, and is the rim
Of that which thou must see before thou die ;—
A sword not held above in haste, nor slow to him

"Who, seeing, watches its descent with fear.—
Other illustrious spirits thou shalt see
Within the vista of my words appear ;
And eyes well pleased as thine directed then will be

"Towards a hundred orbs blending their light,
And with such splendour, making more display;—
Whilst in their spheres revolving seem more bright,—
Because their effluence joined, blends in a mutual ray."

I was as one who fails to understand
The point desired, of it too much had feared;—
When one, the largest pearl of all that band,
The most translucent, to enlighten me appeared.

And from within, I heard him say—"If thou
Couldst see as I, the love that makes us blend
In so much ardour,—thou wouldst others show;—
And that thy expectation may not wait for that high end,

"I will make answer, to thy thought confide
The truth concerning it as meets thy ken:—
That mountain with Cassino on its side
Was once the haunt of ignorance, and wicked men;

"And I am he that bore them the first time
His name,—who was the carrier to the earth
Of truth, that holds so much of the sublime;—
And much of grace was shed on me from shining worth,

"As I restored from baseness of their way
The impious worshippers the world seduced.—
Those other flames around me seen to stay
Were men enkindled by it,—and their warmth diffused

"In growth of flowers and holiness of fruit:—
That is Maccario, and that Romoaldo:—
These are my brethren that with steps to suit
Within the cloister's shade a healthy heart could show."

Then I to him:—"The love which thou hast shown
In speaking to me gives a semblance true
Of those, the like in ardour I have known;—
Much as a Rose dilates whilst in the sun it grew.

"Therefore, I pray thee, father, to impart,
And say if I might share the grace I note,
And well imagine to be in thy heart."
Then he:—"Brother, thy wish shall be fulfilled beyond thy hope;

"And far above those others wish and mine;—
Here is matured, made perfect in the soul
What each desires, and in it each design
Has everything become beyond its first control.

"For this is not the place where things prevent:
But infinite ascent is made to where
Thy vision now directed thus is sent,
Beyond the Jacob's ladder held in angels' care,—

"Where to ascend it now scarce one will turn
From earth his feet, and where that rule of mine
Remains in writing only to discern
The walls that once were Abbey's, reared with much design,

"Now turned to sepulchres; and the monk's hood
Become a sack wherein to garner meal;
And fruit that feeds the heart with folly's food:—
Not for such pleasure thus did God His purpose there reveal,

"Though much the Church regards them—there and then;
Not of God's parentage at His demand,—
Even more vile than other brutish men,
As mortals in their flesh have grown to understand,—

"And failed to see how from an acorn grows
A goodly oak.—Peter himself began
Without the gold and silver:—I, those
With prayer and fast:—Francis his convent built, a humble man.

"Thyself so kept in principles as theirs
Shall see the error which the others hold,
And seeing this—how white as black appears :—
In truth was Jordan's water in its course of old

"Not made a greater marvel, than the sea
Should part its way when God has willed it so ;—
And by his aid a miracle would be."
This said he, and retired within his set to glow.

My lady, with a sign, bade me ascend
And follow where his flight had been inclined,
If virtue such as his in me might blend :—
Though hence to mount so high, looked far, to one behind,

That could not trust with equal strength his wing.
Reader of this, if I might ere return
Unto the holy Triumph, I should bring
A stricken heart and sin's bewail thou couldst not learn,

Who not so much as in and out the flame
Has jagged thy finger :—I who saw the sign
That follows Taurus, from within it came.—
Oh, glorious stars, so full of virtuous light benign ;—

(Such as I am), my genius born of you,—
Ascending to the Father in this life
Of mortals, since first Tuscan air I drew ;—
And when grace gathered in me seemed more rife

To enter, mingling with high circle there,—
From your revolving region I must part,—
To whom I breathed devotedly my prayer,
In virtue's ardent passion grown, gave you my heart.

"Thou who hast come so near a last salute,"
Began Beatrice—"it becomes thee well
To have the light about thee, clear, acute,
And therefore now thy sight may serve thee well

"Look down, and see how far the world of voice
Has been removed, beneath thy feet to stay,
So that thy heart, though sad, may yet rejoice,
And tell to the triumphant throng this joyful way."

Turning my face, I saw within its course
The seven-starr'd sphere, and smiled to see the earth
Still held its old resemblance full in force,—
So that the council I had heard seemed honest worth.

I saw the daughter of Latona fair,
Without the shadow that perplexed me sore
In old beliefs I held of dense or rare;—
The aspect of thy sun, Hyperion, as of yore;

And circling near him, Mai and Dione;—
I saw Jove's course mid-way 'twixt sire and son;
Their changing aspects could more clearly see;—
The seven increased in size, in mighter course to run;—

The net of stars, that furious seemed to burn,
And the Eternal Twins I saw fly past
Like hills of fire,—all these I could discern;—
Then to the beauteous Eyes upward my gaze I cast.

PARADISO

Canto XXIII

THE ARGUMENT

Beatrice now directs Dante's attention to a beautiful Garden, which he is able to distinguish in a subdued light. He sees a Star displaced from its position.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XXIII

LIKE as a bird within some loved retreat,
In an embowered nest, waits for the night
To pass, that she may feed her broodlings sweet,
On food, hid in the fields, revealed by morning's light;—

Her eye attentive fixed for the first gleam,
In ardent expectation of the Sun
That will renew amidst its brightening beam,
A labour which she loves,—so soon to be begun:

Thus did my lady wait with watchful look
Expectant, towards a place where, in the height,
The Sun to us a tardier movement took;—
Whilst I desiring watched, as something new to sight.

Nor long I wait,—for opening to my ken
The heavens in splendour of increase appear;—
And said Beatrice: "See the triumph, when
The gathered hosts are gleaned from out the circling sphere."

Then seemed her face with ardour new to glow;
And in her eyes such fulness of delight
As past my power of making others know;—
And as a varying moon, effaced by solar light

Depicts in heaven its ever-changeful sign,—
So now, above a thousand times illumined,
A sun shone out that never could decline;—
Within its brilliant force supernal light assumed.

And by its living brightness so transposed
The former, that a darkness seemed to send
Where unaccustomed vision was opposed:—
"Oh, loved Beatrice, thou my guide and dearest friend!"

"That which has given surprise so much to thee
Is virtue; to thy health not yet been given;—
Herein the wisdom and the power we see,
Which opens up a path from far-off Earth to Heaven."

And like the fire that, held within a cloud,
Breaks from its bond, and to the Earth will fall,—
Out of its nature was my soul allowed
From a rich banquet to make feast, the mind might not recall.

"Open thine eyes;—see what I am:—this while
Thou hast seen things, that powerful, impressed
And made thee equal to sustain my smile."—
I was as one who would recall a far-off dream supprest,

That genius could in vain to mind restore;—
So when I heard this offer, was renewed
Into such gratefulness as book may more
Omit, than give, in semblance back reviewed;—

For might I sing with all the borrowed tongue
Of Polyphymnia and her sisters, fed
On choicest milk for nourishment of song;—
Her holy smile,—the thousand part of truth would not be said;—

As to her holiness such facts belong:—
And thus depicted, Paradise became
The dedication of my sacred song;—
For as I saw her there, depicted was the same.

Not with the overwhelming thought of fear
That burdened mortals on their shoulder throw,
Nor to be blamed if seen that fear to bear:—
A pilot skilled,—not in a paltry bark the seas would plough.

"Why does my face enamour thee, that so
Thou dost not turn thee to the garden fair,
Beneath the rays of Christ;—to flowers that blow;—
Where is the Rose, who in the Word Divine the flesh could wear:—

"Whilst odorous lilies mark the goodly way."—
Beatrice thus; and to her council I
Attentive turned,—my weakly sight to stay,
And in the shelter of a clouded beam its force would try.

Opened in shade,—a field of flowers I saw:—
Although the splendour had become more dim,
The brightness still remaining as before,—
Only its hidden source might not be seen within.

Virtue benign! that which was there expressed
Exalted above me, in that large place
Whereon my eyes could not endure to rest:—
The name of the fair Flower, that in my case

Duly at morn and eve invoked,—has bound
My soul to celebrate with greater zest;—
And as light in me mingling there was found,
Depicted in some measure what the star possessed:—

I saw it fall from heaven as taper's light;—
Formed in a circle likened to a crown,
Engirded,—and revolving round its might;—
And in its fall make melodies the soul might own

As if a thunder-cloud enwrapt the lyre;—
And so much with the sapphire there was crowned
As seemed of Heaven itself, the light sapphire:—
"I am the angelic love, in the high rapture bound,

"The heart's spring and the bourne of our desire."
And turned towards her:—"Lady of Heaven, now own
That following thy Son has made thee higher
Within the sphere supreme;—and therefore it is known

"Around thee circle melodies of song;—
Making thee so distinct from other light
That Mary's name floats all the air along:—
A royal mantle that enwraps the world's delight

"With more of warmth and strength, than in the wing
Of God's protection,—and the robe to be
Above us";—with its inner edge a thing
As at a distance, where I stood, I might not see.

For not to eyes like mine was given the force
To follow there a coronal of fire,
Which so exalted seemed above its source:—
And as a child will stretch its arms in fond desire

Towards the parent whence it nurture drew,
So doth the soul that flame has touched aspire:—
As light with light the candles will endue;—
That its own excellence and love these might acquire:

As was to Mary manifestly given:—
So to my prescience still remained as sweet
The songs they sang unto the queen of heaven;—
Oh, what abundance has she sown,—and how replete

Those to revive, and joy of harvest find,
Who wept in Babylon their exile tears;—
And where they left their gathered gold behind;—
Where in the triumph of God's Son and Mary there appears

Another victory;—that therein is set
Beneath the lofty triumph of that one;—
And where the council, old and new, has met
With him who holds the key of so much glory won.

PARADISO

Canto XXIV

THE ARGUMENT

Beatrice invites Saint Peter to converse with and examine Dante concerning his Faith, which ended satisfactorily. Saint Peter gives him a Commission and his blessing.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XXIV

"OH, ye Elect! to the great Supper come
Of the blest angels;—whereof ye may eat
In plenitude; let fall to this one crumb
Of the abundance of God's grace, life's span to meet;

"And power bestow on his immense desires:—
As the refreshing dewdrops always ye
Drink of that fountain which his thoughts inspires!"
Thus spake Beatrice;—and delighted souls I then could see

Drawn, as towards a pole, in comet's flame,
And like a horologe the first seemed set
So to revolve,—that weighted thought became
A quiet thing;—another in its flight had met

With different carolling of thought;—with dance
Flew in rich cadence, fast, and then more slow:—
The one whose beauty did the most entrance
Seemed fire, that in delight surpassed all others glow.

And round about Beatrice thrice they flew,
With such a song, so full of the Divine,
Imagination's power fails to endue
My pen, as far above the writing to define.

Not here my fancy's colours could be blent
In living hues, nor speech thereof enfold.
"Oh, holy Sister mine! thy prayer thus sent
In thy devoted love has my dismissal told

"From this bright sphere;—since strengthened in this fire,
I give my Lady all my thought, began
From her high converse,—which did thus inspire."
And she: "Oh Light Eternal, given to that great man

"To whom our Lord left in his charge the key
To lift the portal of a wondrous bliss;—
Visit this one, so swift and grave to be,
As it may please thee, ask him now his Faith in this

"Which made thee once to walk upon the sea:—
If he loves much, hopes much, and well believes;
Light in thine eyes,—no thing is hid from thee,
And all that would displease,—in equal light perceives.

"Become a Citizen,—see if in him is wrought
The truthful Faith this glorious Kingdom bears;—
Speak, as seems good, to him I here have brought."—
And as the Student arms himself and well prepares,

But speaks not till the question is proposed
For proof,—as mindful of another end
Which might afford a reason if disclosed:—
Waiting,—that question and profession might both blend:

"Good Christian," then he said, "tell me thy thought
In what Faith does consist?" My forehead turned
Towards the Light, I inspiration sought,—
And from Beatrice in her look approval learned;—

For water from my font flowed from within.
"As Grace is given me, I will now confess,"—
(Thus to the first High Primate I begin)—
"And by my speech will all my inward thought express:—

"As thus:—The manner of it, Father, as is writ
By thy loved Brother, whom Rome tied to thee
In good accord.—'Faith is the substance knit
To things hoped for, an evidence of that we do not see.'

"And such an essence of the Faith it seems."—
Again I heard: "Answered in good intent
And well directed, if such Faith beseems
The substance;—for on this depends the argument."

Then I, again: "The largeness of the things
And their deep meaning, lately, I have seen,
Unfits the sight below, as custom brings:—
To sole belief, I leave, what highest hope has been

"To those who substance take with much content:—
In the belief of this I herein see
A syllogism, less its side, is meant;—
And thus contented, make the argument agree."

And then I heard: "If those who live below
Acquire through doctrine, intellect, and thought,
Sophists in that place could not genius show."—
Thus inspiration from the flame of Love was brought.

Then added: "Much is known, treasured there
In money which they hold of good or light:—
Say if thou hast it in thy purse's care?"
And I: "Yes, have it, and it is so round and bright

"That nothing can I doubt of in the make."
And then came forth out of the depths of light
A Splendour: "This the gem for whose dear sake
All other values in the purse fall down in weight,

"Whence came it to thee?" I:—"The overflow
Of Holy Spirit, which diffused around
Over the old and the new skin,—has so
Convinced me in its point,—where else obtuse I found."

"Convinced in propositions, new and old,
Which holds for thee the Word Divine then say."
"The proof, it seems to me," I said, "is told
In works that follow:—nature did not Iron lay

"Upon the block,—or molten, fired to glow."—
Came the response: "How then can they aver
That what they work in is the same, or how
Can this be proved,—and yet none else it is they sware?"

"If Christianity," said I, "returned
Into the world, without a miracle,
One of a hundred scarce it would discern,
As thou thyself in poverty and fast beseemed it well,—

"And as a rustic sowed the goodly tree,
Which then was living, since is much defaced."—
And ended thus, the Court of Heaven's decree
Resounded through the Sphere, "One God be praised"—

In melody that is not reached by song.
The Officer from branch to branch that drew
Examination, saw the sprout among
The latest that my apprehension clearly knew;—

And recommenced: "The Grace on thee bestowed
Wide as thy thought, an open speech should show:—
As those who would discharge a debt they owed;
And that which I approve as from a fount should flow."

Again he spake: "Explain belief to me,
And why to such belief thy offering give?"—
"Oh, Holy Father, Spirit,—that I see
Is as thou see'st, as believed by thee I too believe;—

"As towards the Sepulchre, thy younger feet
With swiftness ran,"—thus to him I begin:—
"Thou wouldst in other form that I repeat,
Make manifest belief, in eagerness therein,

"And the same reason for it would require."—
Then added thus:—"In one God I believe,
Eternal, sole, that moves with one desire
All Heaven,—not else impelled their all of Love to give;

"And that belief, moreover, have not proved
By metaphysics and philosophy;—
But as a truth that heretofore has moved
In Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalmody:—

"Through the Evangelists, and those who wrote,
Because their ardent spirits there could feed,
And to the Eternal Three belief devote,
Believing that the essence is in One so Threed,

"As if in suff'rance,—and conjoined to be.
To that profound condition of Divine
As moves me now, I set my seal, and see
More willingly the doctrine these could once define.

"This is the principle, the spark divine
Which so dilates into a living flame,
That like a star of Heaven in me will shine."—
And as the Master who, well pleased, has heard the same

Embraces, with congratulations when
The Servant brought the news, is silent now;—
Thrice girt me with a song and blessing then
Light Apostolic;—whose behest as debt I owe.

PARADISO

Canto XXV

THE ARGUMENT

He resolves to be the Poet of his Faith. Seeing the two Apostles—Saints James and John—Beatrice introduces to him Saint John, who regards him doubtfully at first, but at her intercession enters into conversation, inquiring that attainments and his motive for the visit.

He afterwards proclaims his high commission.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XXV

IF it should happen that my sacred song,
Wherewith my hands have clasped the earth and heaven,
And kept me lean, should conquer cruel wrong,
That found me, sleeping, lamb from a fair sheepfold driven,

The enemy of wolves in that revolt;—
With other voice and in another guise,
I will return a Poet; at that font
Baptismal only will I take my cap as prize.

Not else, but in the faith which brings to man
The mind of God, an entrance give me now,
When holy Peter will my merits scan,
And place the laurel wreath upon my aching brow.

Soon after that, a light appeared from those
Who, at the first, out of a gathered throng
Christ leaving,—for his earliest vicars chose;
And as my Lady saw him come the group among,—

She joyfully exclaimed, "Behold! admire,
Him for whose sepulchre they went to Gaul;—
And where the dove he fed would oft retire,
Near its companion feed,—and murmur love's recall."

From an assembly here a chieftain rose,
Amidst a glorious throng that fed would be,
Praising the food of Heaven that overflows :—
And after the first 'gratulations made with me,

This one in silence fixed on me his gaze,
As doubtful if by my own will I came ;—
Beatrice then as turned towards him says :
"Thou living soul ! who, living, wrote of this our mansion's fame,

"And made resound the hope of the high Sphere,—
Thou knowst how soon is changed the outward mien
When Jesus makes it three-fold bright appear ;—
Assure thyself this one in mortal's world is seen ;

"Accustomed in our rays to be matured."—
And thus apprised, advanced that second flame,
When with my lifted eyes I felt assured
I bent my head too low when salutation came.

"Since grace has willed it, thou shouldst thus abuse
Our Emperor's ruling, and, ere death might come,
The hidden secrets of his council use,
In languishment of hope for a beloved home

"Where thou and such as these their comfort find ;—
Say if adorned as theirs, thy mind the same,
And how to such adornment was inclined ?"—
Thus with his questionings probed me then this second flame.

And one, well pleased, who in a lofty flight
Guided my wing, their answerings would prevent :—
"No son of the Church Militant, by light
Of our sunbeams, has more of hope within him blent

"Of all our troop ;—here for a while to bide,
As Egypt once would toward Jerusalem wend ;—
And seeing,—is a militant prescribed ;—
Two points in thy demand has yet to apprehend ;—

"Known by report;—a virtue that so much
Has pleased thee, that I leave with him, that he
Be not too strong, or in vain-glorying such,—
But in response, as grace of God is given him, be

"A Scholar, with the gift of second sight,—
Ready and liberal, where he now is skilled;—
Because his goodness can discern the right
That hope as an attendant I am sure will be fulfilled

"In future glory;—so produced will be
By grace Divine, that he in life excell:—
Many within this light of Stars I see;—
This in its scintillation first within my heart to dwell.

"Who midst the chiefest singers won chief fame;—
Wouldst thou spurn from thee in thy Teo-dia
As an adornment one who knows thy name,—
And will know more of it, when he has learned the fede
mia?

"Thou, whose elixir of the pencil's dip
In thy Epistle wrote so much of me,
And others whose replies it would befit,—
Mark me:—behind the living heart of this will be

"A flickering lamp, incendiary, that will fire
Frequent,—and hide as in the lightnings play."
That Spirit then:—"As mine, love will inspire
All those by virtue led, who follow in my way,

"And Bearers of the Palm, then leave the camp—
Wouldst thou that I breathe on thee their delight;
Partakers of that grace, hast thou their stamp,
The promise and the hope which these have held in sight?"

And I: "The Scriptures in the Old and in the New
Attest the sign, and show to me the way,
In mind of God, who for my friend I view;
As saith Isaiah: 'Those who have borne array

"'Of vestment, as on Earth, above appear,'
And the delight of life on Earth have found:—
So if thy Brother clothed upon whilst here,
Seems in more whiteness clad, the inference will abound."

And as I pressed towards my ended word,
Sperent in te, sounded above in song,
As a response to this all Heaven I heard:—
And after that came out a light so clear and strong

As if from Cancero fell a crystal seed,
That Winter had a month of sun debarred;—
And as it sprang and came with dancing speed
The new novitiate in its virgin joy to honour and regard:—

Not as a fault, together, in the light
Came this towards me,—then two, to whirl and spin,
In the intensity of Love's delight:—
As such into the Canto put, nor noted more herein.

And the same aspect did my Lady wear,—
Held in the silence, an immortal spouse;
And I, as on our Pelican to bear,
Clung to its breast, the cross,—to that high office chose.

Then did my Lady with no more of fear
Set close her face to mine, attentively
The first of these my uttered words to hear:—
And I am that:—the sun in half eclipse to see

Where mortals' sight the gaze might not beseem;—
So if my argumentive skill has force,
Only as debtor to that latest theme,
Is it because there is no place to see its dazzling force?

On Earth, as earthly, I, the same can see
As many others that our numbering here
With the intent Eternal must agree;—
As two habiliments are worn, so in the light appear.

And this I carry to the world below ;—
This is the voice that with its ardour blends
A quiet rest in sweetest mixtures flow,
As with three Spirits joined the voice of song it sends ;

And where fatigue is past, and risk, and fear,
That in their flood at first would overthrow ;—
All that, but as a whistling sound I hear :
Alas ! how much of it had once disturbed me though,

As to Beatrice in my haste I fled ;—
Although not seeing her as then, I yet
Have found her close to me on Earth instead,
And happiness whilst living even in the world have met !

PARADISO

Canto XXVI

THE ARGUMENT

Dante here expresses a doubt if he can retain all these impressions; Saint John, then continuing his discourse, bids him remain on Earth for a while, and immediately proclaims his high commission.

Afterwards Beatrice invokes the spirit of Adam to appear and converse with him.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XXVI

AND whilst I doubted lest this brilliant view
Might be extinguished in me,—now perceived,—
Came forth that spirit, my attention drew,
As thus he spake:—"Thou that hast all of this received

"To find the vista wasted in thy thought,
From out my presence,—soon to be consumed;—
'Twere well that Reason to thy aid be brought,
Begun precisely where thy soul had been illumed,

"So that the vista should not wasted be,
Or Reason in thee seem to be as dead,
Because the Lady who had guided thee
Has by the virtue of the hand of Ananias led."

Said I:—"It was her pleasure, swift though late,
To remedy the eyes that entrance saw,
And of the fire she brought could warmth partake;—
The good that to this court does all contentment draw

"Is Alpha and Omega,—where is writ
My law of loving kindness, strength to feel,—
Whilst the same voice which, changed from fear, had lit
With sudden glow; and left to reason's late appeal."

"For certainly a more imperious will
Than thine enlightens and inflames thee here,—
What then should hence direct thy bow of skill?"
And I:—"All arguments, philosophic and clear,

"And an authority that these transcend;—
When so much love was to my nature sent
With goodness, as I then could apprehend
That of all good, had love the greatest goodness meant."

"If in such essence an advantage is,
Where both are good, how out of her is found
Another ray less luminous than this,—
More as to other things belonging all around

"In lovers thought;—why should it sever so
A truth that in its depth is most approved?"—
"That truth within my intellect would grow
To that it demonstrates and is the best beloved,

"When of all sustenance eternal known;—
For spake the voice of One, that author true
As unto Moses:—'All my goodness shown,
I will make pass before thee': this the valued view."

"Stay thou awhile on Earth"—then as began—
That presence with his cry filled all the height:
Through that large place his proclamation ran:—
And this I heard:—"By human intellectual light,

"As by authority, do thou record,
And of thy loves, make God's the sovereign guard.
Though after thou mayst feel another cord
Drawing thee from him,—of these sounds debarred,

"That as with sharpened teeth thy love would kill.
Not is unknown the inventions eagles hold
Holy, as if of Christ, without my will;—
And men of my profession, led by them are told."

Then soon he recommenced: —"All those they feed
To strengthen hearts, as to their God they fly,
With all my charity are well agreed,—
Remaining in the world, are in it such as I,

"Who death sustained, are living as I live;—
Because their hope is faithful as was mine,
And in foreknowledge of their death still thrive,
Drawn to the shores of Love,—directed by that sign.

"The leaf from which embowering leaves shall spring
In the eternal gardener's care, am I,
As unto them, from him the good I bring."
Then was I silent;—and the sweetest notes on high

Resounded through the Heaven. My Lady then,
With all the others joining in the lay,—
The holy, holy, holy's deep Amen:—
And as my eyelids fell before the unaccustomed ray,

Which, opening, shut again to that they shun,—
The while necessity kept constant guard:
So that esteem in failure part begun
And lower,—towards Beatrice turned with thousands more reward,

When from those eyes I saw refulgence pour;—
Whilst I, who seemed as in a stupor held,
Begged her to give me but one part in four,
That I might as the others see,—who this beheld.

Then said my Lady:—"Out of such a ray
The Maker of the soul the first man sent,
That primal virtue might increase and stay;—
And as the branch that on its leafy top was bent

"In transit of the wind,—will rise anew
By its own virtue, if sublimely led,
This seems as too transcendent for thy view;—
And lest in ardour I return to that I said":—

She recommenced :—"Oh, fruit that made mature
Its offspring bore ;—the parent of all those,
As wife or daughter,—nourished, still endure,
Devout as may be,—I entreat thee speech to close ;

"Thou hearest all, but hast not spoken yet."—
Then like the animal, in joyful ways
Affection shown,—with its companion met,—
Allowed to follow there,—hidden no longer stays :

The soul of the first man did then appear,
As made apparent from its covering shell,—
And came towards me with a rejoicing air,
As thus the spirit spake :—"I can discern full well

"Without thy asking, something thou wouldst know
More certainly ;—as truthful glass I see
Reflecting knowledge of the things below ;—
And nothing of a false appearance there in thee :—

"How God had placed me in a garden high,
To which in thy desire thou wouldst ascend,—
Which was indeed delightful to mine eye ;—
Would know the deep disgrace a fall from this could send :—

"An Idiom—that was used and came by me :—
Oh, son of mine, not tasting of the fruit
Was in itself a cause of the decree,
But solely that I trespassed where it did not suit.

"For that which moved thy Lady's,—Virgil's care,—
Four thousand years, three hundred and yet two,
I waited that it reconcilement bear :—
For near a thousand years the sun was in my view

"As first I saw him shining on the world :—
The language that I spake was then all spent.
The works of Nimrod failing, had unfurled
New languages, which, to Nimrodian people, meant

"That no desire irrationally inclined
Should ever be fulfilled in human will ;—
Following a course that Heaven alone designed,
Always immutable,—and firm continuing still

"As works of Nature, differing in their plan,—
With this and that adornment left to you.—
When to the infernal shades the first I ran,
One they had named on Earth, the Highest Good, I knew ;—

"And hence that great delight revealed in me :—
ELI since called him in accordance sake ;—
The faded leaf as mortal's use we see
Within the branch renewed, will like appearance take.

"Upon the Mount that stands above the flood,
My life once pure was since dishonest made ;—
From earlier hours declined and left the good,
As falls the sun from fourth to sixth in evening's shade."

PARADISO

Canto XXVII

THE ARGUMENT

Saint Peter here continues his discourse. Afterwards Beatrice bids Dante look down on the vast scene beneath, and predicts some important changes in the Earth's Governments.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XXVII

TO Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the songs
Throughout all Paradise enwrapt me there ;—
As I had drank in what to song belongs,
And to the universe, a smile from this could bear.

Inebriate of the bliss I heard and saw,
A glory of ineffable delight,
Where Love and Peace seemed filled with bounty's store,
Secure without the greed, where riches take their flight.

And after this, resemblance in the Four
Seemed to increase, and he, the first that came
Another's liveliness depicted more,—
As Jove, with Mars exchanged in colour,—still the same.

And Eagle winged,—unaltered in attire.
A Providence that best can make complete
Each part and office in the blessed choir
Midst silence had disposed to every one his seat.

And then I heard :—"If I my colour changed
No need to marvel at it when I say
The change of colours everything deranged.
Those that on Earth usurp my place within their sway,—

"My place,—the place I have vacated now,
Called to the presence of the Son of God,—
Have of my blood a Churchyard made,—the slough
Perversity aspires unto,—and sinks beneath the sod,

"In that same colour which the sun reversed
Paints on the clouds in morn and evenings flame,
When Heaven itself would seem to be dispersed."—
Then like a truthful lady,—honestly the same

Shrinks when she hears of others faults the tale,—
Beatrice, in her semblance seemed to change,
Methought as in eclipse the heavens might fail
If lost to power supreme, Possession there should range.

Thus he proceeds—his voice so changed of mood,
An utterance in its tone unheard before:—
"Not thus the spouse of Christ raised from my blood,
Of Linus and of Cletus took of gold the store,—

"But to acquire by purchase life of joy
See Sextus, Pius, and Calixtus bleed—
After much suffering and of grief's alloy;
Not our intention was, left handed thus to lead

"Those our successors hence, to seats apart;—
Above all other Christians to be found;—
Nor was the key conceded on my part,
Thus to become a standard in the battle fields around.

"Nor would I bear the impress of a seal
In privilege to barter and to lie,—
The things I disallowed, wherein they deal;—
And see the shepherd a rapacious wolf,—the pastures vilify.

"Oh! justice of my God—why this delay;—
Our blood the Cahorsines prepare to drink,
And Gasions;—oh! that baseness should betray
Good principle,—and thus behind it slink.

"But that high providence which could defend
With Scipio, Rome's earthly glory there,
Will succour quickly, when my words descend;—
And thou, my son, by mortal's weight brought down, declare

"My message;—with an open mouth let know,
Nor shrinking hide that which I dare unfold.
And though the vapour fall in flakes of snow
Below our air,—soon as the sun has touched with gold

"The horn of the reft goat, I then can see
Triumphant over mist, adorning flowers
Spring from the ground, sojourners there to be;—
Then everlastingly to stay with us, as ours."

The Lady who so much attention lent,
And seen me listening, said:—"Look down—what height."
As since I made with her my swift ascent:—
When far removed I saw within an arch of light

The midst and ending of that older land,
And passage that had led so near the shore
Ulysses, and the following of his band
That hence, delightsome burden of Europa bore.

And more might have discovered of the view,
But that the sun proceeding from that part
Beneath my feet hid it in sign more new;—
So now the love I bore my Lady, always in my heart

Had back my eyes to hers in ardour brought;—
And if on nature, Art once there had fed,
But failed to paint in human eyes their thought,—
All seemed as nothing to that peace Divine her smile since shed

As virtue which had kindly guarded me;—
From Lida's lovely nest had plucked me out—
And Heaven impelled in swiftness bade me flee
Through pathways filled with light, and highest life throughout—

So uniform become, I could not tell
How from Beatrice and her place to part;—
When she who knew all my desires so well,
Commenced to laugh on me with so much joy of heart

That scarcely God seemed in her mirthful plight.—
"All nature moves around one moveless sphere
Quiet and in its midst;—upheld in flight
The first who moved it, since has all conformed to there;—

"And by the Heavens upheld, not less in sway
Of thought divine: whereto we see asunds
The love that towards it hither flies alway,
When virtue like a fall of rain on it descends

"In light and love which well the circle knows
When these are like it,—as was all foreknown
Of Him who in a ring could thus enclose,—
And in their movements solely his intentions own.

"Whilst others take a measurement thereby,—
'As is the middle so is fifth' they say."
And as for time—the tree's top long may lie
Concealed within its roots, nor yet its leaves display,

"Or manifest to thee the time of flower.
Oh what a fondness,—now that mortal's part
Lies stretched beneath thee,—not one there has power
Backward to draw thy eyes to that from whence thou art!

"By man the flowering time may not be sped,—
Or when the rains may change the withered fruit,
Whereon belief and innocence had fed
In childhood,—till maturity of years might suit;

"And there distinguished, ripened thus and aged,
Such food they will devour so soon as seen,
That by its quality esteem engaged;—
And as a Mother's love, the stripling's once had been—

"Is only now desired put from the sight:—
Because the fruit skin that had pleased the child,—
In earliest gleams had seemed to look so white,—
And all its prattling, stammering innocence beguiled

"Now changed to black,—brought there, is left to dry.
And not to marvel longer thou must know
That Governments are not for those who try
To push Earth's human family as of the vile, below.

"Though first, pale January, all out of gear,
The century's neglect left in its snow
Shall roar so loud in the supernal sphere,
That fortune fane would turn and make the poop the prow.

"If the Fleet so commanded onward ride
Where expectation had awaited so:—
The flowers of truth no longer then denied,
Shall blossom, and the fruits of truth hereafter grow."

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PARADISO

Canto XXVIII

THE ARGUMENT

Dante is doubtful of the success of his mission in the great poem, and has a prophetic insight of its reverses after the two centenaries of its first reception. Afterwards of its variable and then complete success in its seventh centenary and afterwards.

Beatrice instructs and encourages him.

PARADISO

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XXVIII

IT may be that against a life like this—
The miserable mortal's,—truth revealed,—
Making my thoughts emparadised in bliss,
Shall seem but as a lantern's torch,—within the glass concealed

To those behind; well seen by him the same,
Who holds it then within his sight and thought,—
And so revolves it that beneath its flame
Is seen the truth he speaks in strict accordance wrought

With note and metre as may still arise
In memory of facts once there beheld,—
Whilst looking into those, the beauteous eyes,
By love first drawn,—and with its cord there firmly held;

And as I thus revolve it,—reach towards things
Given me thence, and in this volume seen;—
So much as a returning gaze it brings
Sent keenly back,—of that my soul enflamed had been:—

And for convenience chosen point in view;—
This star seen near the moon,—scarce less I say
As star with star harmonious influence drew;—
Perhaps as much when near the edge,—mist clears away.

Distant and round this point circles a fire,
Whirling so swiftly that its movement stills
When nearest cinctured,—as the world's desire;—
And this was as another a circumference fills,—

That of the third;—and then fourth less than third,—
Fifth less than fourth,—and sixth than fifth less part:—
Over the seventh such abundance stirred
That Juno's messenger full pleased might know the work of art.

So of the eighth and ninth;—and each of those
More slowly moved when from the first away;—
And those that most sincere the flame disclose
Are those the least in distance from the star's pure ray;—

Believed in most, because regarded more.—
My Lady then seeing I had a care,—
Greatly perplexed:—"From such a point of store
Depends the Universe and all of Heaven is there.

"Aim of the circle,—nearer it is drawn
And known, the swifter will its movement be
Through languishment of love when toward it borne."
And I to her:—"If the world out of course I see,

"And seeing that it thus revolving tends,
Experience I should have in that I note;—
For in the world they find the flight ascends
And more divine to seem, the centre most remote.

"If a desire of mine should end like this,—
In marvellings where angelic hosts reside,
Who only Light and Love know for their bliss,
How should he be in evidence who does not coincide?

"Vainly but for himself all this has seen?"—
"If these my words have not thy knuckle's ring,
Marvellously insufficient this had been
For a foundation;—what is worth thy hold of such a thing."—

Thus spake my Lady:—"Then take that away
Which I have spoken, if self-satisfied,
Whilst round thee dwindles all for lack of stay;—
Humanity is larger built,—grows from within more wide

"As virtue more or less extends its parts;—
The larger bounty gives it greater health,
And greater health to crown of head imparts
If in complete apportionment each takes its wealth.

"When this man, who so much admires the whole
Of the wide Universe, agreement knows,—
The more he loves it, more he can unroll;
Virtue his stature fills, that in delight then grows.

"As marvel above marvel circles there,
Within the heaven of his intelligence;
Whilst splendid and serene the empyrean air,—
When Boreas with sufficing blow has cleared it thence;

"Purging it so as to dispel the smirch,
That first had darkened, where now laughs the Heaven,
Restored to brightness of its own research."
Thus had my Lady clearly her responses given;—

Like to a Star of Heaven that shone the more.
And these her words came with restoring power
Where nothing seemed unkind, but semblance bore
To lightning's swiftest flash amid the darkened hour;

Whilst yet more frequent broke the enkindled flame;
As these in latest scintillations sent
Most frequently,—behind their brilliance came
So much the more,—what seemed as last dismissal meant.

I felt the hosannas of the Chorus cease,
When backward to Earth's outer court assigned;—
Always to stay, where I had found release:—
And she, who knew my inmost thought, and doubtful mind:—

"Circling the centre of attractive force,
Cherub and Seraphim, as shown thee, fly
With more celerity as from their source
They draw increase of power in their sublimity.

"Those other souls of Love around it met,
With aspects so divine,—are thrones of might;—
The first treology for them has set;—
And thou must know that these have found their great
delight

"When to their deepening view the truth profound
Has been revealed,—enlarged in meaning still;
Whilst they can only love that latest found,
And see the measure of reward Grace gives good will;—

"As step by step towards highest trinity
They germinate, and grow to greater height,—
In this the Springtime of Eternity;
And when, no hoof of Aries spoils, or frosts at night,—

"Perpetual hosanna there returns;—
Within three melodies, that sound like three
In ordinance, as now heart joy discerns;—
Within the hierarchal state there are three in degree:—

"First Leadership, and then the Courage force,—
And Governmental power the third to be;—
'Tis possible within their circling course
Archangels shall with Principalities agree,

"And ultimately may with Angels sport.
This Ordinance above all else remains:—
Whilst down below are God's offenders brought
All tyranny is there,—and all that tyranny retains.

"A Dionysius once had pondered much
Within this ordinance to place his name:—
Distinct from mine it would have been as such:—
But Gregory after him, as in dissension came,

"How swift to eyes, when opened wide in Heaven,
Does the similitude of things appear;
And as a secret to Earth's mortal's given,
Seek not to be admired if in the quest of Glory *here*."

PARADISO

Canto XXIX

THE ARGUMENT

Beatrice bids him rebuke the Preachers of that day and their sale of Indulgences paid for with base coin of the time of Pope Boniface VIII. She afterwards alludes prophetically to a far distant day of glorious and concentrated light.

PARADISO

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XXIX

SOON as Latona's daughter-twins had shone,—
Covered with Aries' and with Libra's light,
That made the horizon seem but as one zone,
Engirt with all the splendour of the Zenith's height.—

As each with each combined its circling glow,
The hemisphere in equilibrium failed;—
And with a smile of joy all this to know,
Beatrice silent,—whilst on me the power prevailed.

Then spake she thus: "I wait not thy demand
For that which thou wouldst know, of me desired,—
As I can see all this,—and understand,
Not for myself alone such good has been acquired.

"Nor would it be fulfilled unless I speak;—
And in this powerful splendour thus sustained,
In the eternity of time, thus led to seek
Another's apprehension,—there to be retained,

"As it may please Eternal Love to show;—
Make manifest thereby a newer love;
Not that the first should ever torpid grow,
Or any discord against this be put above.

"Form, and material joined, and pure beside,
Came from a height that never knew a fall,—
A tricord arch, in three still to abide:
And as the rays resplendent shine through all

"The amber and the crystal,—these enfold
When nothing from outside can intervene,—
One sire effecting this, the cord threefold,
Without distinction from its primal scource thus seen;

"Nor bound to power as else,—deriving each
Their high creation,—not from less derived.
Jerome has written, and would teach
That angels in the world were first, as so implied.

"But this the truth, is written much more plain
Within the Holy Spirit's record blent,—
Which thou wilt see when looking at again;—
That not conceded if perfection had not full content.

"And know thou shouldst when so beloved were those
The first created, how much then was given
Of thy desire that three it might enclose,—
With highest angels now desiring food of Heaven,

"That still remains with thee;—this work begins
Which thou desirest with so much delight,
That nothing from its circling influence wins:—
Superb in malediction first to fall on those thy sight

"Can chiefly see constrain the world to sin;—
Though knowing this, in modesty consent
A recognition of the good within,
Which at the first had formed so much of good intent,

"Because the sight had been exalted so,
With grace illumined these in their regard;—
If such fulfilled has stayed their wish to know,
No doubt but they received such grace for their reward

"Accorded as affection there inclined :—
Always distinguish this consistently
When so much of my words thou canst refind
Without assistance from outside authority.

"But as on Earth those of the schools instill
The angelic nature is recorded so
In its intention,—and as such in will,—
Then speak, because thou seest the truth, and clearly know

"This is equivocation, falsely said ;
Whilst joyful sustenance is in God's face,
Not turned away,—from whom is nothing hid ;—
Where these will not in any new obedience trace

"Their interest, and wherein they would not seem
To be reminded of devised deceit ;—
Thus lying down, but not for sleep, to dream,
Believed, yet not believing truth in their conceit ;

"But none more culpable or shameful shows ;—
You need not lower go for a bye-way
Philosophic,—so much will they transpose
Love of a thing apparent,—for what they think or say :

"Then, above all, they treat with great disdain
Those that the Sacred Scriptures put aside,—
Which they themselves distort and make so vain,
Nor heed how much of costly blood sown in the world beside

"Their pleasure,—and which gives them small reproach ;
But those can see, the men who have their wits,
How much their pure invention can encroach ;
And which the Minister and not the Evangelist befits.

"One says the moon has turned her face away,
Christ suffering, and was henceforth interposed
Because the sun's light does not lower stray ;—
And others, that the light withdrawn was since so closed

"Because the Spaniard and the Indian in the dark,
As with the Jews in like eclipse remained;
Not Florence could more Lapi Bindis mark
Than those that from the pulpit cry their fables strained.

The whilst the sheep, not being over wise,
Turn from their pasture, fed thereon with wind;—
And well excused when that so much implies.
Christ said not to his first conventicle assigned

"Go teach the world, and idle fables state;
But give them truth for a foundation sure;—
Which always sounds so much within their prate,
And thrusts back those that mount towards a faith, so pure

"It gave Evangelists their shield and lance.
Now whilst they come with motive and intent
As if to preach the Gospel,—'tis askance
To laugh within their cowl,—which gives them most content.

"But nestling there, so much of offal reeks,
The vulgar, looking in, are not afraid
Pardon will be withheld from him who seeks;—
And where so deep in confidence his speech was made.

"That in the world much folly should abound,
It needs not further witness to assign:—
Saint Antony his pigs such fattening found;—
And many others, that are even worse than swine

"Pay for it in their money's coinless pay.—
Now having thus digressed so long, return
Thy eyes towards that other straiter way;—
If not too late in the extent of time, discern

"Where Nature has increased in numbers, aged
Not to be spoken of or known to man
In revelation,—or its distance gauged;—
For many much too far apart the way to scan;

"But thou, if thou shalt mind what was revealed
Through Daniel, thou wilt see thousands of years
Determined that which was to be concealed:—
That Light, the first whose rays in different modes appears,

"Received,—is full of splendour when these match;—
Because the height that is attained unto
Is as a love that all the affections catch,—
In differential fervour,—tenderest warmth renew.

"See now the exceeding height and largeness grown
Of the Eternal will;—perhaps thus much
Observed in facts has now to thee been shown—
For a memorial of that which is to come, a touch."

PARADISO

Canto XXX

THE ARGUMENT

Dante with Beatrice arrives at the confines of the Central Sun, where he is permitted to see the Triumph of Christ's Church.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XXX

SIX thousand miles in distance as it were
The fervid noon was past, and to the world
Returned its shadow,—where in deepened air
The farthest stars were hid, and the mid-heaven unfurled

Herein appeared a clear Aurorian light,
Where the Sun had declined, and heaven enclosed
An infinite of vistas yet more bright,—
Nor altered otherwise,—and round one point disposed

As in triumphal dance,—and drawn thereto
By the sole influence of attractive force;—
The power engirting them engirding so
As by degrees extinguished from my sight their source.

And turned towards Beatrice could not see
The former love that had constrained me there;—
So much had infinite revealed in me
As should include her, too, and in one praise to share;

Though little I might know her finished worth—
The beauty that I saw did so excell,
It was not made for those who dwell on Earth:
Yet could I well believe her Maker there to dwell.

As in its highest flight thus soars my theme,
And more than ever points towards its end,
Thus much concede,—that therein it would seem
That Tragedy and Comedy it might perhaps transcend.

And as the Sun beheld, increased in awe,
The memory of her smile was hidden so
From the first day her living face I saw,—
And more remote became the songs I sang below.

But this I knew, that if I followed less
And left behind her beauty,—more should feel
Of the true Art that poetry can bless,—
And in the Poet does his latent power reveal.

Leaving behind for the tumultuous throng
To celebrate that which decreased within,
Had cooled the ardour of material song;—
My Guide with hastening sign and speed would thus begin:

"Now have we reached unto the fount of Heaven,
Filled with all light and intellectual love,—
Love that in true delight is freely given:—
Delight, that every earthly woe can soar above.

"Where may be seen the troops now here, now there,
All of one aspect; as in Paradise
At the last judgment thou shalt see them wear."
Then, as in flash withdrawn, were hidden from my eyes

Those Spirits that so visible appeared;—
In failing vision now were lost to sight,
Enwrapt, as all their dazzling influence neared,
Within a veil,—darkened as with excess of light.

The love that once has thus been felt from Heaven
Will gather to itself a healthier mind,
As to a taper greater light is given;—
And not less swift above myself its influence was defined.

For from this newer vista I received
Such light and in such measure as my eyes
Could not support,—although in mind believed :—
Wherein I saw a river full of light to rise ;—

Between two shores it ran, enamelled o'er
With flowers that wore a marvellous touch of spring ;—
And from it issued vital sparks of power,
On this side and on that, which to the flowers could bring

Of Ruby and of Gold the garniture ;—
When as inebriate of their own perfume
They plunged into the wave, they were no fewer,—
For as one dived beneath, another was illumed.

"The strong desire that will not be restrained
For knowledge of the things which now we see,
Gives me most pleasure as the more constrained,"—
The sunlight of my eyes regardful answered me.

"And of this water know that those who drink
An equal thirst for it must first attain."
And thus she spake :—"The river at whose brink
The topaz lies,—and enters in, only to rise again ;—

"The smiling verdure whereon these can rest,
Is but a shadow of more perfect bliss ;
Not that its measure should disturb thy zest ;—
But thy defect in vision may not reach to this."

Then as an infant on its mother's breast
Draws its first nourishment, and turns again
Towards a fountain that has seemed so blest,—
As through a mirror then I sought my eyes to strain

Towards those who had descended in the wave,
And hidden from my sight were there submerged ;—
Would dip my eyelids' fringe wherein they lave,
And whence, as from an endless circle, they emerge :—

The whilst within it as they thus remain
Unaltered seemingly their former look,—
And recognised as still to be the same
When in a higher festival they there partook.

And mingling thus, the flowers and sparks of light
Made manifest to me the Courts of Heaven.—
Oh, splendour of my God! that in such sight
The triumph of a virtuous Kingdom there is given.

And thus illumed made visible to those
Who seeing Him alone have found their peace.
Creator! thus his creature to enfold,
A sun's circumference,—seen in largeness to increase,

And still the rays surrounding it the same
As at the first; but these reflecting more
The power and life they hold within its flame;—
And as descends a mountain top seen in a watery floor

That mirrors its adornments,—giving back
The all of verdure and of flowers it grew,—
When these depart, and parting leave no track,
Then all surrounding light gives back unto our view

More than a thousand thrones, wherein can blend
So much of us as fitted seems for Heaven:—
If toward infinitude our footsteps tend,
Think ye to this large Rose too many leaves are given?

This vista mine, neither in breadth or height
Shall e'er be lost,—but unto all will show
Some mete proportion of a great delight
Not near, or too far off, not seen too high, or low,

Where God shall govern without medium's aid;—
And laws of Nature will suspend their power.
The Rose eternal was not made to fade,
But still dilates and rounds in odours of the flower

Exhaled in sunshine of Eternal spring.
Turned to Beatrice :—" Tell me who are those
Silent, who yet would speak, and seem to bring
Such marvellous whiteness to conventional stoles ?

"Seen in our City, how at large they rove ;—
Appearing to our sight as so replete
That scarcely others to desire would move."—
" Yonder now turn thy eyes to fix on that great seat,

" And where a Crown above is set so near ;—
The first one at the Marriage Supper thou
To see where sits a soul of coinage dear
True impress ; fallen Italy that raised,—high Arrago :—

" A blind cupidity, to sickness bound,
Has made *her* like an infant that resists
Its nurse, and famished dies :—thus to be found
A Prefect, of the Court Divine hidden or named insists :—

" But not in suff'rance long will God allow
In holy office,—but will downward thrust
To where the Sorcerer Simon's merits show ;—
The fall of him of Allagna, to be more just."

PARADISO

Canto XXXI

THE ARGUMENT

Wherein Dante expresses his wonder and delight at all he has been permitted to see. Beatrice suddenly takes her departure, leaving Saint Bernard to discourse with him.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XXXI

As a white Rose, Saints militant I saw,
That Christ in his own blood did once espouse;
Whilst others, like to Bees round honeyed store,
Told of their one Beloved the fame,—from sweet's carouse:

These all like living fire, gold-winged, or white
As snow, that from the earth no taint receives:—
Whilst round the flower they linger in their flight,
Clustering in swarms to rest in largeness of the leaves.

With great contentment sounding forth his praise;—
As far they fly, to bank the gathered store;—
Nor darken in their burdened flight the rays
That fill the Universe with light:—the less or more.

Nor power prevents:—and where, above these dwell
In realm secure and vast,—as marked they view
The kindly faces that beseemed them well,
Frequenters of an olden world,—now of the new.

Oh, Triune light, shining on this one star,
That in its scintillation gives content;—
Guard us below where all our dangers are,
In the bright radiance from thy effluence sent!

If those Barbarian hordes, that robbers came
From Northern climes, beneath the cold starr'd sphere,—
That gave to Elise every day new shame,
Bearing away her sons to dwell the robbers near;—

Coming to Rome, from far, the marvel saw
Of all her works, and stood in mute surprise
At such magnificence;—whilst in their awe
The Latin race surpassed all others in their eyes:

Well then might I, to the divine in man
Passed, as from time into Eternity;—
And out of Florence, excellence to scan,
And just men,—marvel even more at that I see.

Truly to those who make of it but game,
I have no liberty in this record:
Others again I hope to see the same,—
A pilgrim to the temple of his vow restored.

If by the living light that I pass through,
I may direct their eyes to mount on high,—
As step by step they strive to gain my view,
And following it, return, and yet again will try;

They shall see faces of persuasive love,
In ornament of light,—high honours crest;—
The form they wear in Paradise above;—
The all of whose regards I have but part exprest.

And wishing in renewed desire to learn
Of that, the doubting, had perplexed me sore,—
Towards my Lady once again I turn,
To see Beatrice still—when someone else I saw:

Not that intelligence I wished to find;—
But an old man robed like the glory there,
His eyes diffusive, and his manner kind,
Such as in saintly joy a father might appear.

"And where is she?" then instantly I spake;
And he replying: "Thy desire to end,
Beatrice moved me to my place forsake;
In the third circle see enthroned thy friend

"Where merit placed her."—And my eyes I raise
To see her wearing a celestial crown;—
Reflecting in herself the Eternal rays
Of that pure region,—where she meets with more renown

Than mortal eyes discover in the deep
Of other seas;—and hidden from my gaze;—
Though not descending with me, memory's sleep,
Nor distance—has removed her in the midst of haze.

"Oh, Lady, thou in whom my hopes were set,
Who, saving me, thyself has suffered so,
As even within Hell thy track was met;—
To whose benignant strength, virtue and grace, I owe

"All I have seen,—and as I have by thee
Been freed and rescued by thy power and care;—
In thy magnificence my guardian be;—
So shall my disembodied soul well please thee there."

Thus did I pray: and from the far off came,
As then appeared the smile of her regard,
Returning to the fount from whence it came;—
And thus the holy man: "To gain this, thy reward,

"Perfect thy steps towards that garden fair,
Where love and prayer have met thee—sending me,
So that thou mayst ascend, in holy care
Mounting up higher,—and by Light Divine to see.

"Shall not the Queen of Heaven, whom I regard
With so much ardour, not accord me grace?
As I am faithful to her—her Bernard;
The same as came from Croazia's far-off place,

"To see an ancient picture, of whose fame
I was not satisfied alone to hear;
And said within my thought, when shown the same,
'Did this my Christ, true God, or your resemblance wear?'"

Much had I marvelled at the living love
That in this world of ours such peace could show.
And "Child of Grace," he said, "think not to move
In joy like this, thy eyes set on the things below.

"Search now, and in a circle more remote,
See as thou canst so much the seated Queen,
Who in this Kingdom subject is devote."
And as I raised my eyes, a light like morning's beam

In the far East, along the horizon spread,
Sovereign, where lately had declined the sun,
That in the vale its light no longer shed
Yet seemed, and on another side, in mighter force to run.

Just as some, waiting, watched in fear, the car
Of a bad charioteer,—as on he came;—
And there, and thence, saw, as it rose afar,
The lessening of that light from the great oriflame;—

When midst of heaven, the torch pacific burned,
And with an equal force subdued its fire
More than a thousand angels, winged, had turned
In festal joy their splendid feathery wings attire:

Seeming in all their gladness and their song,
Each to enjoy more soul contented mirth
Than to the eyes of mortal saints belong:—
And tell this as I ought,—or left to fancy's worth,—

In neither way would lessen their delight:—
Whilst Bernard, following where my eyes would rest
From colder glance,—fixed his attentive sight;—
And, seeing this, renewed in me my ardent zest.

PARADISO

Canto XXXII

THE ARGUMENT

Saint Bernard continues his discourse. Dante is still doubtful if these revelations in his new experience will be found acceptable in the world.

Dante

PARADISO

Canto XXXII

FREED from his office cares to contemplate
In pleasure as a Doctor, as revealed
In holy Scripture, this could now relate
How "Mary's wound received on Earth, when healed

"Made her so beautiful that to her feet
Were brought the opened wounds for her to close;—
Who as ordained has taken here her seat,
Where Rachel sits beneath her, and all those

"Here gathered with Beatrice meet the view—
Sara, Rebecca, Judith;—where we see
Ancestris of a Singer as we knew,
Could in a faults repentance sing the *Miserere mei.*

"Lower if possible there sit as Chief,
Those like myself were known as Chiefs in name,
The Rose below unfolding leaf by leaf.
And in a seventh grade those who thereafter came

"Far as they might as older Hebrews deemed
The Heirs apparent of a noted Head
When faith of Christ, so much in difference seemed
A wall partitioning from the holy Stairs they tread.

"Not longer parted when matured and freed,
The flower evolves from all its outer leaves:
Much would assist those in a present need
Who watch for Christ to come and of their want relieves.

"See in a path as intersecting, those
A semi-circle more complete to hold
Who having seen the Christ on Earth disclose
More of his Glory than had others after told

"All which this Lady of the Heaven might know
How much to others this a difference meant
As in a contrast the great John could show
Who in deserves for holiness to death they sent

"And after to the Inferno, in two years.
Beneath him sits Francesco and his set
Augustin, Benedict and other seers
Making a Circle as before in life they met.

"And marvel not in Providence Divine,
The one and other aspect of the Faith
The Impyrean Garden robbed not of its shine,
If every step below is taken in good faith.

"As by a middle course is better known
The merit solely to be claimed in this,
Where one above another is not shown
The sole condition each no true election miss

"And best perceived in each by their good will
Nor listened childishly of those they guide,
The best regard who listening to them still
Can wait in silent doubt, and doubtfulness would hide.

"But if I solve aright thy inmost thought
A stronger will than thine has this impelled
And to this realm of ampletude is brought
Not by some casual influence, former power upheld.

"Whereto no grief in thirst or hunger bring
In laws established, and so many take
Responsive as the finger to the ring:
For a good reason, here they can a Feast partake.

"In truer life when seen, and this because
The guests are more or less the excellent
Drawn to this kingdom in the other's pause,
Their King beloved as loving, and in close content

"With truer life if seen, as thus sustained
The joyful looks on all so well imprest
Believing as they please of grace obtained
In a diversity of gifts, and so to be expressed

"Clearly as when before they trod the earth.
Contrast in Holy Scripture see the Twins
Esau and Jacob who before their birth
Disturbed their mother, yet unconscious of their sins

"As if one might, in coloring of the hair
See grace implied, and seeing this endowed
One all unequally the Crown to wear,
To difference in costume such merit be allowed.

"Sufficient for those ages past, if found
That Innocence in health can be maintained
When to a parents faith in strictness bound;
For surely those the first in age have best obtained

"The knowledge how to guide the youthful wing,
If circumcision could to virtue bend.
Such times if past, to grace might better bring
By baptism the Innocence, else left behind.

"Allowing always that this had impressed
A semblance when so taken, as a sign
In preparation of that Christ had blest;—
To whom thou canst, I see, with greater joy incline,

"Created as those born of holy thought
Can journey onwards till they reach this Height
Where in the advance of years we see them brought,
And less I sigh for now housed in their God's delight,—

"Filled with that love I spoke of at the first
Ave Maria sing with more of zest
Than on the Earth, the name they still hold dear,
Responsive to the Songs Divine that thus appeal

"The more distinctly echoed through each court
Where every vista is yet more serene,"
"Oh, holy Father, how will this comport
With my sojourn on Earth where so much less is seen

"Than this Eternity has left unsealed,—
For if the Angels held within their thought
Our Queen beloved, and insomuch has healed,
What power could part us from the warmth her flame had brought.

"And part us from a Doctrine is allowed
To Mary, in esteem so much is held
As if Sun the Morning Star endowed."
Then he to me: "Those Angels who at first our joy beheld

"Were Souls increased in value when they knew
More than on Earth, where chosen they might bear
The Palm for Mary's Son, when seen below
To take so willingly for us his burdens care.

"But if thy eyes can follow much as mine,
And that I speak of comprehend as well,
Know the great Patriots who hither climb
Have of a kingdom's piety and justice more to tell

"When nearer to the august presence drawn
Where two as best for happiness can reach,—
Where less two differing roots the Rose had borne:—
And he who with his left hand one could reach,

"The daring Father, thus enticing those
Of human race who following him could see
A holy Church adorned by such a Rose,
Himself commended as of Christ to hear the key

"Where so much loveliness had been imprest.
But those the graveness of the age inspired
Sow that to die the spouse beloved the best,—
Her vacant seat by lance and key solely acquired

"In the high place of power as Duke to sit
And feed with manna all ungrateful those
Who for his leadership would seem more fit,—
Contrast to Peter, as if Anna might disclose.

"That in content had been revealed before,
As miracle that to Hosanna led.
In a great Father's family the more
In contrast Lucia, who thy Lady hither led.

"Before the keys to ruin had consigned.
As if such times were past I can select
That best for nourishment digestions find.
To a great love devoted would thy eyes direct

"To that well guarded here could penetrate,
Nor hurt the sight beneath this veil of shine
Which verily thy wing would not abate,
Directed as at first,—but drawn in newer line,

"Thankful for grace thus far to penetrate,
Thankful from much of power to be released,
Following affectionately love's relate."
Then this his holy Orison began as much believed.

PARADISO

Canto XXXIII

THE ARGUMENT

Saint Bernard renders here high Orison to Mary.

Dante on his return to the World will portray so much of the Vision in his poem, as may meet the Mortal Comprehension, adapting his style to that end.

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Dante

PARADISO

Canto XXXIII

"OH Virgin Mother, handmaid of thy Son,
Humble yet higher than of others, chose
In the Eternal's Council to be one
That so created might the Human Race enclose.

"As nobly born thy Maker would approve,
And not unworthy his creative power.
Who in thy bosom had received the love
In warmth to generate in peace the eternal flower.

"Which to the Mortals in mid course might prove
How charity from life's own fount can rise
In springs of hope true to their source of love.
Oh Lady, held so great in whom such value lies,

"And so much grace, who would not then desire
Without thy wings yet if at distance fly,
Seeing thy great good will could first inspire
A liberality anticipating want's supply.

"Seeing much Mercy with thy Pity blent,
To thy magnificent assembly brought
Those who created good to Earth if lent,
From lower places of the Universe had turned their thought.

"Where thy Assembly is of those who led
By spiritual instinct, one and all,
Can supplicate for Grace, and when so fed
Turn more to Virtue if they hear Salvation's call.

"This for myself I too had so desired,
In profering my request had humbly prayed
The door might not be shut as I retired;
Because the only cloud I saw to send a shade

"On my morality, a prayer like mine
Might in displeasure all its force displace:—
So had I prayed, Oh Queen, a power like thine
The whilst beholding thee would old affections chase;—

"My natural movements keep in thy command.—
See how Beatrice from her home of bliss
Responsively to thee has reached her hand."—
To this I listened and had turned from God's own love to this

My eyes fixed on the Orator the more
In veneration where my thanks were due,—
Turned from the Eternal light's direction saw
Rekindle those desires I would not here review.

Bernard this recognised, and with a smile,
For well he knew how I would guard my thought
Which turned from him would stay with me awhile,—
My vision though relieved had not as yet been brought

To gaze within an entrance well I knew
Would bring me higher light, and in its ray
By slow degrees new truth would meet my view,
In better light than now my eyes less lead astray;—

And in a larger space hold more in view
When speech like ours might but a hinderance prove
If memory from behind the curtain drew—
And some new passion lately found possessed my love.

As after sleep the dreams we not recall—
Impressions that they leave not so depart,
Though unsubstantial Images may fall
Their influence leaves a sweet distil within the Heart.

So might an Early Sun disolve the snow,
And winds of Heaven no record leave behind
On leaves that might the Sibyl's secret show,
Oh light of lights, supreme above all other mind

In mortal's knowledge, give me back in view
Some part of that I saw when so unsealed,
And with its power my after speech endue
As if some lonely star thy glory had revealed.

And possibly to after men rehearse
So much as left in memory's recall
Might seem to them sweet sounds held in my verse :—
Hereafter comprehended in its meaning full :—

Made as the record of an ardent flame
Which had sustained me, and would give increase
To those the greater in attainment came ;—
And when my value in its aspect might decrease.

Oh, what abounding grace, that I presume
To fix my eyes on that Eternal Light,
Before the prospect others might illume ;—
Out of the depths profound be after given to write

The volume framed for universal use,
As if some accidental food received,
Those in accordance with it might peruse :—
And in their different reading more on value feed.

Conformable to this I might unfold
So much to their belief as these might be
In an accordance with their light if told ;—
But if in larger space would give more joy to me.

Waiting to fix my meaning in the rhyme,
Whilst in a lethargy the moments creep
Like five and twenty ages,—counting time
Old Neptune watched for Argus' shade darkening the deep.

Or might some youngling stayed on mother's milk
Attempt in speech the words less understood;—
In the vocabularies not expressed:
If so my utterance fail, not less I bathe in good.

In rapt attention, all my powers of mind
Concentred in the gaze that fixed my eyes
On a transcendent light;—I saw combined
Within one marvel, yet another marvel rise.

But memory holds it not; nor can endure
What would efface or mar all other joy;
Intolerance of a lesser good procure,
And mix the present earth's delights with an alloy.

For in the abyss of radiance I beheld
Three circles that were blended in one bow:
And in reflection every ray was weld;—
The third, like fire, caught from the others' glow.

Yet this to what I saw, than little, less;
Oh, Light Eternal, of all else possessed,
Sole understood;—still thou dost seem to bless
Reflection; for I saw our image there impressed.

Like those well versed in geometric lore,
Puzzle the circle with a measuring line;
And anxious all its mystery to explore,
Can find no settled point the starting to define,

So I, with strong desire and looks intent,
Would fit the Image to its circling fame,—
Which in agreement, still revolved, but lent
No power to tell its might, or fix a name.

Nor might I speak, struck by that dazzling light,
Which veiled in thought, of utterance debars;—
The Myth, and my Desire, still keep their flight
Silent, and voiceless, like the Love that moves the sun and stars.

THE END

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